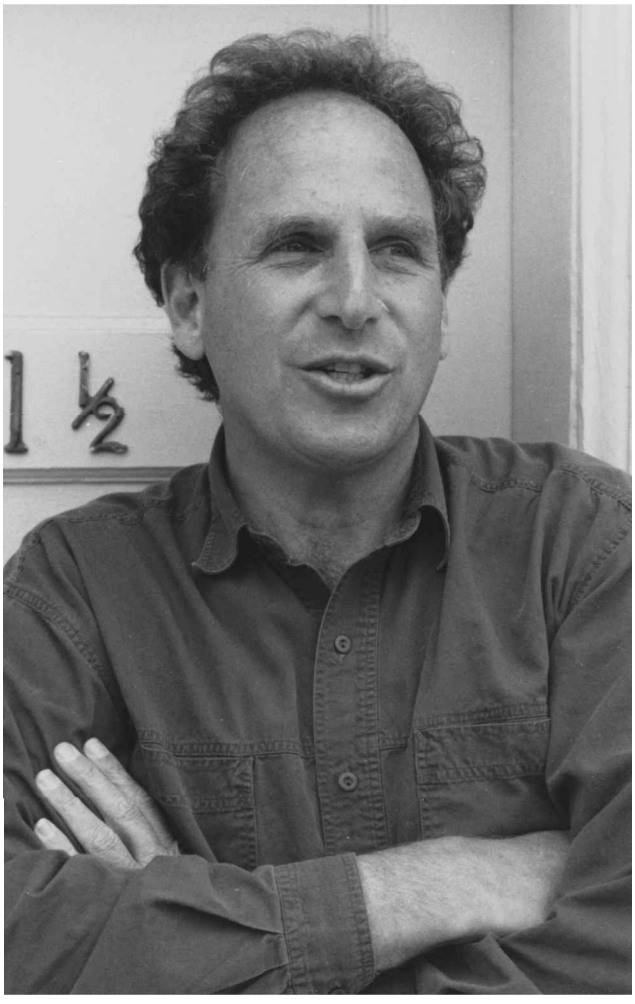

Scott MacDonald

Sacred Speed

An Interview with Nathaniel Dorsky

That cinema can be a meditative practice might come as a surprise to most casual filmgoers and even to a good many cineastes. For a generation, film critics, scholars, and teachers have honored accomplished auteurs and debated the possibility of authorship; they have explored genre conventions; they have policed cinema in the name of more progressive gender, ethnic, class, and sexual politics; they have used a wide range of approaches developed in other disciplines to expose how cinema functions in modern culture—and they have ignored virtually all forms of cinema that reflect a meditative sensibility and offer the possibility of a more complex spiritual life. And yet, despite the relentless pop-cultural marketing of consumer goods and an accelerated lifestyle and the increasingly frenzied media overload, some audiences have come to appreciate forms of film experience that offer a respite, that transform the movie theater into something like a sacred space where we can, at least for a moment, ignore these pressures and more fully apprehend and appreciate the moment-to-moment incarnation of the perceptual world. Among the American filmmakers who exemplify this trend are Larry Gottheim, Peter Hutton, Leighton Pierce, and San Francisco-based Nathaniel Dorsky, who's been making a variety of contributions to independent cinema since the mid-60s.

Dorsky arrived on the New York scene with a trilogy of short films—*Ingreen* (1964), *A Fall Trip Home* (1964), *Summerwind* (1965)—evocations of his childhood and adolescence in a New Jersey small town (Millburn). Most obviously in *Ingreen,* but to some extent in *A Fall Trip Home,* we see Dorsky—in a cinematic form that recalls the psychodramas of the 1940s and 1950s—coming to grips with the combined excitement and terror of gay desire. Unlike the defiant early landmarks of what we now call Queer Cinema—Kenneth Anger's *Fireworks* (1948), Genet's *Un Chant d'amour* (1952), Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* (1963), etc.—Dorsky's films reflect what must have been the more usual ado-

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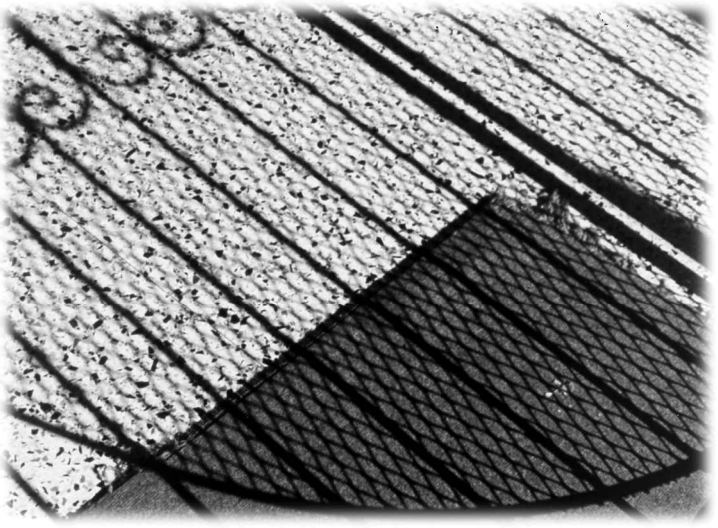
lescent experience of confronting gay desire. And they opened the door for him to work on films by others—a job which earned him an Emmy in 1967 (for *Gauguin in Tahiti: Search for Paradise*), a reputation as a "film doctor" who can save ailing films, and just enough money to maintain a life and make his own work.

By the time of *Summerwind,* Dorsky had become fascinated with a new form of cinematic perception: an intense looking at the particulars of the physical world that, in the years that followed, would mature into a series of remarkable visual experiences, most notably *Hours for Jerome, Parts 1 & 2* (1982), *Pneuma* (1983), *Alaya* (1987), *Triste* (1994), *Variations* (1998), and *Arbor Vitae* (2000). The visual sensibility of Dorsky's mature films (all of which are silent; Dorsky asks that they be projected at 18 frames per second) is akin to Japanese haiku. Each of the individual images and image clusters of the Lake Owassa area of northern New Jersey and of Manhattan that together make up *Hours for Jerome* is like a prayer; indeed, Dorsky's title references the medieval Books of Hours that provided Christians with the daily cycle of prayers and relevant illustrations ("illuminations"). "Jerome" is simultaneously a reference to Dorsky's partner since the 1960s, filmmaker Jerome Hiler, and to Saint Jerome. While the Books of Hours focused on the daily prayer cycle, *Hours for Jerome*—like Susan Fenimore Cooper's *Rural Hours* (1850) and Thoreau's *Walden* (1854)—explores the particulars of the seasonal cycle. *Part 1* records spring through summer; *Part 2,* fall through winter. Along with Gottheim's neglected *Horizons* (1973), *Hours for Jerome* is America's most compelling cinematic paean to temperate-zone seasonality.



Arbor Vitae

Both *Pneuma* and *Alaya* ("pneuma" means soul or divine inspiration; "alaya"—as in Him*alaya*—is a Sanskrit word used in Buddhism to refer to the primordial individuality that underlies our social selves) focus on particular forms of texture. Dorsky asks viewers to meditate—in *Pneuma,* on the film grain of a variety of disappearing film stocks he had collected in the 1970s, and in *Alaya,* on sand filmed in a variety of places and ways. By asking viewers not just to consume endless representations of "reality" but to focus on the essence, the "soul," of cinematic representation, Dorsky transforms the textures of film stock and sand into emblems of the spirit: he breathes life into the "dust" of cinema.

Dorsky's most recent films expand his exploration of what he sometimes calls "polyvalent" montage, a form of editing that means to redirect editing away from the dialectics that energized the Russian films of the 20s and also away from the narrative demands of pop cinema, toward a refinement of viewers' ability to perceive the subtleties of particular images and the complex webbing of interconnections between them. Dorsky's polyvalence means to place viewers into a cinematic present that cannot be reduced to verbal codes and analysis.

Dorsky lives in San Francisco. His newest film, *Arbor Vitae,* completes a second trilogy (*Triste* and *Variations* are parts 1 and 2). It was shot during 1999 and edited in 2000 and, according to Dorsky, "is haunted" by the end of the millennium.

SCOTT MACDONALD: *The earliest films you list in the Canyon Catalogue*—Ingreen, A Fall Trip Home*, and* Summerwind—*can't be your first films*. . . .

NATHANIEL DORSKY: They were the first films I made after I had taken a big bite out of experimental film in New York in, let's say, 1961 to 1964—after seeing things like *Chumlum* [1964, Ron Rice], *Meshes of the Afternoon* [1943, Maya Deren], and *Twice a Man* [1963, Gregory Markopoulos]. I was at a very effective early silent screening of *Twice a Man* and at one of the famous showings of Jack Smith's *Flaming Creatures* [1962]. And Stan Brakhage came and premiered *Dog Star Man: Part I* [1962], which I think was the first time I saw one of his films.

I had started to make films when I was around ten or eleven with an 8mm camera. I was very influenced by the Disney "True Life Adventure" nature series, like

Beaver Valley [1950] and *Nature's Half Acre* [1953]. They were the first time I saw, for instance, flowers growing in time-lapse. They were very photographic films, held together with music and narration. Both films went through the four seasons, and for some reason I was very taken with that.

As a kid, I was a big fan of John Ford. My parents took me on a trip across the country when I was in fourth or fifth grade. We stopped in Reno, and they went to gamble at a casino. There was a place where parents could leave kids while they gambled. And—I couldn't believe this—not only were there free hamburgers and coke, all you wanted, they were showing free movies with a 16mm projector. I saw *Stagecoach* for the first time, and I remember being blown away. I loved Westerns, and there was so much tenderness and nobility in this one. It felt very adult to me. There was a pregnant woman. It was both feminine and masculine, like Ford *is*. When my parents came out of the casino, I said, "I just saw the best movie I ever saw."

Crumpled napkin in *Arbor Vitae*

So if someone were to ask who were the main influences of my youth, I would have to say Disney, Ford, and Ozu, Antonioni, Brakhage, and Jerome Hiler—Jerry, my better half—maybe most of all. A strange collection. All my films are a little bit Disney-like and Ozu-like. There are lightweight attempts at Fordianism in *Summerwind* on a literal level; I've always been conscious of Ford's sense of light (of shooting *into* the light, that is)—Ford's sense of the sacredness and magic of gravity and luminosity.

Later, during that same childhood trip west, we were visiting some army buddies of my father's in Santa Monica, and he let me take a shot with his 8mm camera. It was of him diving off the diving board and swimming across the pool. I still have it. The whole roll of my father's stuff pans around Old Faithful and Grand Canyon—just the worst. And then all of a sudden there's *my* shot. I guess I was so petrified that I was going to move the camera too fast (I'd been warned about this) that I took this very nicely composed shot that follows him diving in and swimming. It was my first shot. But it was very good!

To get back to your original question . . . Later, when I was 11, I used my father's camera to make my first films. One is called *A Bend in the River,* which I realized later must have been named after the Anthony Mann film. My *Bend in the River* is a nature film, about the animals in my neighborhood—a turtle, and ducks. It has no formal pretensions and it isn't a film that says, "You can see a budding genius here."

So by the time I went to Antioch, I had some background and, for whatever reason, was ready to fall in love with film. I saw an older student with a Bolex, and the camera was a magical thing. You know. Everyone has that feeling when they see a movie camera. It represents some sort of alchemical power.

During that period, I made three films in black-and-white. The first one was under a tutorial—a work montage of the new college swimming pool being built. I had been seeing the Russians—Dovzhenko, Eisenstein, Vertov—at the cine club at Antioch. On a mundane level, that stuff is easy to emulate. I did two films like that. Then I did a send-up of *Last Year at Marienbad* [1961], called *Next Year at Marienbad*. I still have it. I saw it lately and was surprised that some of the blocking was very beautiful. Some of it was sophomoric.

One of the things that strikes me about Ingreen *is the way it energizes the history of psychodrama. The early classics of psychodrama are accomplished and interesting, but often visually grim.* Ingreen *seems visually celebratory of the arrival of sensuality, even as it reveals its psychic traumas. There is a struggle, but it's not a grim struggle. The color balances the fear of gay desire, the way Anger's humor in* Fireworks *balances his fear.*

You know, my actual feeling at the time was the opposite. It was plain old middle-class terror. I mean, my being gay was something I had known about since I

was seven or eight. You know you're sort of like everyone else . . . but not entirely. I wish I could say that I was a courageous anarchist who didn't believe in any of the surrounding societal values and made his stand. But it's odd enough that I made the film. I guess the up side of those painful feelings is that they drive you to make a visually powerful and sensual film.

To my knowledge, no one has ever shown *Ingreen* in a gay festival. Actually, I don't like to show my films in that context. It's not my cinema orientation to identify myself that way.

Triste: Jerome Hiler

The only single-layered shot in Ingreen, *which is full of multiple superimposition, is, I think, the boy running across the field and kneeling in front of his father. You can read it as the Boy becoming a Man, giving up the pleasures of boyhood to achieve manhood. You can also read it as a boy being terrified about how his father will feel about the reality of the boy's desire.*

I'm almost begging, "Please like me," in the simplest language.

My father died about a year after I made *Ingreen*. Later, my mother asked me, "So what did that shot mean?" I couldn't answer her. I realized then that that film was both extremely conscious *and* extremely unconscious. In a certain way I'm embarrassed by its playing out of the early 60s' gay psychological stereotype of a close mother and distant father. But in a certain way that was also *true* for me. It wasn't really until much much later in life that I relaxed a little about being gay. Finally you figure you might as well enjoy your life, scary as that might be, and endure the difficulties.

That autumn I made *A Fall Trip Home* over a period of three months. I did *Summerwind* the next summer. I made all three films really fast.

When I spent time with the trilogy, it struck me that *Ingreen* is about sensuality, about your personal recognition of how wonderful (and scary) it is to be a sensual being. *A Fall Trip Home* focuses more on your growing awareness that you are also a social being. And *Summerwind* seems about a growing aesthetic consciousness.

There's another thing: In the middle of making *Summerwind,* my oldest friend, Mark Birnbaum (now a video-maker) opened up his hand, and there was a sugar cube with acid, and he said, "We're going to the woods today." I said, "OK." That morning I was in New Jersey, but at the end of that day, it was no longer New Jersey. I don't know where I was.

The forest primeval?

The primeval forest, yes! And I was Bambi! In the end, that film was trying to capture my new Bambi consciousness.

On a technical level I knew that I'd made two films based on superimposition and I was trying to struggle out of that. As soon as I finished *Summerwind,* I started shooting the material that later became *Hours for Jerome,* which I didn't edit for 15 years.

How did *you come to make it?*

Just after I moved out here, I went through the worst psychological period of my life. My father had died (I'm an only child); I had moved in with Jerry, and by doing so, I had distanced myself from my mother. My mother and I had very complex ties, so this separation, at the same time that *she* was in need, ripped me apart. Nothing was clear. And moving to California was very disorienting for me. All of a sudden, coming out to this place with these weird rubbery trees, and strange seasons . . . The move to San Francisco forced a closure of my filming in the Northeast, where I had been recording imagery since my childhood. So the point is, for the first eight years of the 1970s, I was in a very bad state, and not able to edit. I had so much self-hatred.

In 1978 a friend from New York, the poet Larry Fagin, came to visit. And I said, "Oh, you've never seen the footage I shot when Jerry and I lived out in Lake Owassa." It was in cans covered with dust: rolls of the original Kodachrome II, which was so beautiful.

We took the film out, strung it up, had a toke, and spent the evening looking at it, and we thought, "Oh my God! There's a film there!" Larry was very supportive at that time. Finally, I could *see* the footage and realized I could work with it, and wanted to work with it.

At what point did the process of putting this piece together and creating this structure take on a sense of an illustrated ritual around the year and get connected in your mind with the medieval Books of Hours?
We were living out in the country when I recorded that imagery. I think I was in the same balance with the landscape as someone who was working on a Book of Hours. I've always loved the Books of Hours . . . the idea of luminous contemplation. Nature, often with cities in the distance. In terms of the number of people in the world, that seems like a nice time. Like a certain period of Chinese painting, where you have a sense of human society as a harmonious element in a larger order. Things have become much more grotesque in modern times.

When you were editing Hours for Jerome, *was the process largely putting things up against each other, trying connections out?*
In that film, because there were four seasons, I cut each season separately. In order to keep myself fresh, I'd work on one season for about a week, put it away, and come upon another season that I hadn't worked on in three weeks. A structure was developed within each season. When I attached the seasons, some work had to be done with the points where they connected. Everyone says, "Oh, that film has such nice color." That's partly Kodachrome II and a very good reversal print stock . . . neither exists today. But it's *also* because the images are very carefully placed. Each move had to have visual freshness along with a poetic poignancy, not only in terms of color, but in other ways. I would put something next to something else, and if it didn't feel additive, adventurous, and also at the same time poetic in some way, I wouldn't go with it.

Some of the editing in *Hours for Jerome* had been done during the period when I was shooting it. Like those jump cuts of Jerry making coffee at night, with the moon; and the shots of Fourteenth Street in the rain intercut with black-and-white television. I was trying to get at collisions of flint and stone, to create sparks, trying to collide things, rather aggressively, and produce some new kind of space and luminosity. These passages are also a reflection of my spirit at that time: I was getting more and more depressed, and as a result I didn't have any tenderness toward the footage. The only way out was through aggression. This isn't unlike many young filmmakers, who are very pained in their twenties. Of course, the audience may now read these moments only as beauty.

Warren [Sonbert] pushed me to go all the way with my editing. He thought *Hours for Jerome* was too descriptive. But there was something about that footage that made me feel obligated about its sense of place. When you go into what I sometimes call polyvalent editing, as Warren usually did, and as I do from *Pneuma* through *Variations* and *Arbor Vitae,* the *place* is the *film*. Another, better term for this kind of editing might be "autogenous montage." "Autogeny" means self-generating.

But in *Hours for Jerome* I had to respect place. And I had to respect the seasons. However, even though *Hours* is organized into seasons and into clusters or stanzas (or whatever you want to call them), I did try to get resonances between the stanzas, and to have synaptic relationships between different parts of the film. That film allowed me to discover how to place things so that they would resonate later. Remember the shot taken under the El in Queens? It's preceded by a Ferris wheel in the rain and by a black-and-white cat drinking water. But right before *that* is the sequence of Fourteenth Street in the rain, intercut with a black-and-white TV. The TV has this rippling motion that is echoed by the light coming through the El tracks three stanzas later. I knew if I took the El and moved it five sequences further on, nothing happened; and I knew if I moved it one sequence closer to the TV/Fourteenth Street sequence, it felt like some corny Russian parallel editing, like when Vertov, in *The Man with a Movie Camera* [1929], cuts between a woman washing her face and someone hosing down a street. I don't like parallel editing. Vertov was trying every possible syntax, and simple parallel editing is one of the possibilities, but in general it's too one-dimensional for me. I want complex resonances, not simple parallels that can be easily verbalized. Of course, other sections of *Man with a Movie Camera* are the genius birthplaces of polyvalence.

I was very conscious of going to black at the end of each stanza. Many times there is an afterimage, either physical or psychological, during that black, and at times I begin a new stanza with something that resonates tonally with the afterimage resting in the black. An obvious one might be that after all the strobes on the autumn trees, your eyes go to blue because there has been so much red-orange on the screen. Afterimage is always the reverse, color-wise. And then, out of that blue, pops in that white and red rooster. There are

others I really love. After you see the panoramic autumn landscapes with the pixilated cloud shadows, I fade to black, then come up on Jerry's brown shoe—a huge difference in scale.

Triste *begins with a series of shots that sets the stage for a wide range of resonances. The first imagery is branches moving. Then there's someone writing a letter in close-up: we see the lines of written text. Then a hose laid over itself, echoing the overlay of the branches. And then you're in a car, and telephone poles flick by in a way that subtly echoes the motion in the previous shot . . .*

Stan [Brakhage] said something very good about *Triste*: "The shots never have a vanishing point." And I had never thought of it in those terms, but it's true. I'm crazy about the period of painting that begins in the early 1400s just before the invention of vanishing points—Piero della Francesca, Fra Angelico, Hans Memling, Roger van der Weyden. . . . When I go to Europe, I always make sure to see those paintings because it's a point where depicting the world as itself was considered sacred. There was the beginning of perspective, but perspective hadn't become the egotistical thing it became later on.

Triste

I'm interested in the magical point between the self-denying sense of the earthly life and an overly worldly sense of things, between a period of anti-ego and the later era of "Look, I'M doing PERSPECTIVE!" ego. It's a point when the marriage of the seer and the seen, the whole thing, is considered and *is* the sacred.

That kind of painting influenced *Triste* and *Variations*. I said to Stan, "I hope every image is both a piece of something, of light energy, and at the same time, an icon: you see what it *is*." But it's neither purely light energy, nor purely icon. My cutting is an attempt to create resonance without solidifying concept, so that I don't produce mental linkages that can be reduced to language, which is the filmmaking nightmare now. The films I work on to earn money—or 95 percent of them—use images to *illustrate* language. I do it for money, but it's painful.

The more I looked at Pneuma *and* Alaya, *the more I wondered if they weren't the same film, done in two different ways: with sand, and with film grain. When you made* Alaya, *did you have* Pneuma *in mind? Were they conceived as a pair?*

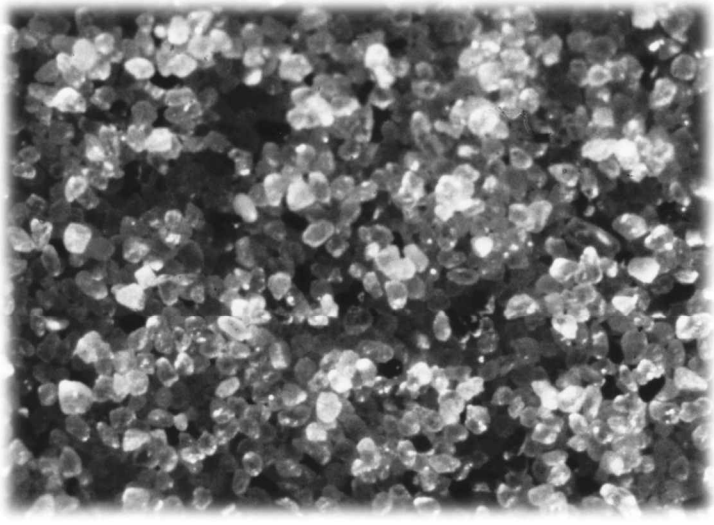
Pneuma was made first. Both came from the desire to express the same thing, but in different ways. The same is true of *Triste* and *Variations*. *Pneuma* and *Alaya* are about a minute different in length. Both have to do with what they call in painting "all-over"—the films articulate through a succession of all-overs. And there are other specific parallels: the relationship of close-up, extreme close-up, and long shot is one. And about three minutes from the end, each has a cadenza. In *Alaya,* it's the time when the sand really starts to collapse; in *Pneuma,* it's the long blue section.

Anyway, both films are exploring the same thing. I collected the material for *Pneuma* during the years after shooting the footage for *Hours for Jerome*. I was in L.A. working on exploitation features. I was lost and depressed. I had no desire to use fresh beautiful stock. I remember I started a roll and couldn't get up the interest to finish shooting it, so I just ran it out of my camera and sent it to the lab, and the *only* wonderful part was the part I *hadn't* shot. Then I began to collect *really* outdated film. I said, "All right, I'm not *shooting* anything—I don't like the world enough anymore—so I'll just collect this stuff." It was the twilight of all these reversal emulsions—Gevaert, Fuji, Ilford, Kodachrome II, Dynachrome. There are about 20 different emulsions in *Pneuma*.

For whatever reason, working with the grain and color of these film stocks answered my inner needs at that point. What I saw when I just developed the unexposed film stocks felt like an internal world. Somehow, it was healing. I collected that material and then, after I cut *Hours for Jerome,* I found that my energy

was back and began to have a little faith in myself. I examined all the stocks and made *Pneuma*. Collecting the material came out of expressing a certain kind of vacantness, but then I think the film turned into something not vacant at all.

There's a halo around the screen if you see *Pneuma* projected really well. Nothing *mystical*—I just mean the imagery appears to surround the edge of the screen. Sometimes the imagery seems out in front of the screen, sometimes it seems right on the surface; and sometimes the screen is a window. After a while, you don't even know where the screen *is* anymore. The pleasure of that film is to relax and see the screen and its surroundings.



Sand in *Ayala*

Alaya is a little bit like that also. When I made *Alaya,* I was coming to actually want to *photograph* something. I was visiting some friends on Cape Cod and just took a few shots of blowing sand. You know: This is intriguing to me—click. And here, I live ten minutes from the ocean, where every springtime, there's all this wind blowing the sand. So the subject was right in front of me.

When I was trying to finish *Alaya,* I realized I had to collect some very dark shots to give the film the kind of muscle it needed to go forward. I started to shoot very old color and black-and-white stocks, sometimes underexposing the black-and-white. There are many times in *Alaya* where a shot is 60-percent film grain and 40-percent sand. And there are times when the grain of the sand and the grain of the film—the two graces, or natural *entities,* of this work—touch each other in an amazing way.

Did you tint any of the imagery? Sometimes we'll see a particular texture of grain in black-and-white and then, later on, the same texture tinted a color.
It was just the various film stocks. When those 60s film stocks got old, some went blue—like ER. A stock called MS always went a little bit greenish. I worked very hard on the prints so that I had a palette of blue, yellow, green, tan, and black-and-white. Sometimes you can't really tell when it *is* black-and-white. What was thrilling for me is that I knew (as I did when I edited *Hours for Jerome*) that I was working with synapses that went back underneath a few shots and came through. As I placed the shots in *Alaya,* I knew that a shot would work because of the effect of the two or three previous shots.

How did you do the microscopic shots?
Well, embarrassingly enough, some of that imagery was shot on a home-made "sound stage." There are three times when I shot very close. The first time—the material that looks like jewels—was shot on a windy day in the dunes on Cape Cod with extension tubes, which allow you to focus closer and closer. Then there's an orange sequence that I shot later, on the beach here in San Francisco, at sunset. I had to get my camera cleaned about three times. The third time I was in my cellar: I put sand in a baking tray, used my vacuum cleaner (an Electrolux that can blow) to make "wind," set the camera on the tripod, and used two photo floods very close to get depth of field. I needed a great depth of field, because when you use that many extension tubes, you might not be able to keep a single grain of sand in focus from front to back. So I had to use a lot of light to get it up around F8. The lens was so hot, I couldn't touch it.

It's a stunning film.
I think it's a very *body* film. *Alaya* is certainly a safer film to show an audience then *Pneuma,* which is quite dicey unless there's great projection, or great love of film itself.

Critics have sometimes complained about my work—especially *Pneuma*. But my work is indefensible. If someone feels *Pneuma* doesn't work, there's nothing I can say. How can I disagree? I was trying something and to what degree it's successful or not depends on your willingness to go along with it. If you do, I think it can be very beautiful; but if it just seems

unrelenting in its monomaniacalness, what can I say—I can't argue with your *experience* of the film.

By *Variations,* I was better at making my method apparent—well, not better at it like a pro; you never get *better* at it, but you do develop. I began to understand how to make a montage that opens up. A shot can't relate directly to the previous shot, because if it's too similar or too parallel, then there's a literal meaning, a reductive connection. If the shots don't connect at all, then it's nihilism. It's easy to do nihilism in film, you just put things together that are very different, so that the imagery is not solidifying around meaning. At a certain point that kind of filmmaking wears you out.

Variations

I want successive images to be disparate *and* connected, *and* I want each shot to link back to earlier shots. They say that grandchildren are actually more like their grandparents than their parents. My method feels something like that: I want each shot to continue to play a role, after the next shot, and the next, has passed. In *Variations* I really started to understand my method. At first I could only do it by chance, but slowly I realized how to make this kind of movie, and what its rules are. Each shot must break the film open and at the same time resonate with previous material. The connection can be as simple as the return of a certain red or of a particular pattern. Sometimes it's the iconography. There are various levels where your mind can make connections.

To me, there's a real progression from Pneuma *to* Alaya *to* Triste *to* Variations. Pneuma *is pre-image.* Alaya *is image, but it's working with the same principles. Since it's always the same basic imagery, at a certain point you get tired of saying "sand" and you move into some other realm—either it becomes pure energy, or states of mind—or else you just can't stand the film.*

In *Triste,* I'm trying the same thing, but with *multiple* subject matter. With multiple subject matter the chances of success are greater, but so are the chances of failure. As in life, the more you take on and do successfully, the more full your life is. The down side for me is the danger of falling into language-based meaning. *Triste* is also shot on old film stocks; it has this incredible palette of strange colors. *Variations* is mostly Kodachrome 25, and it's much more about layers and passion. So in a way, *Variations* takes a further risk: instead of being monastically withdrawn, quiet, and looking at the world as a quiet loner, the way *Triste* does, *Variations* expresses more love for the world. The change is not something I consciously tried to do; it's something that's happening as I grow—organically, the way a tree would grow. I've never been able to just turn films out. Making a film has always come from a spiritual need.

Would you say your commitment to silent *film is a function of this spiritual need then?*

Recently I showed *Triste, Alaya,* and *Variations,* and was very moved because I knew each of those films had taken five years or more of work and a lot of pain, and there they were on the screen, beautifully projected, and I remember thinking, "This is almost as gratifying as going to a good Western! The silence is palpable and strong." A silent filmmaker can take an audience someplace deep.

I realize silence produces another experience. At a certain point, I came to feel that the silent film is monastic. It's not a Saturday night movie; it's not worldly. It's more a sabbath movie—a chance to be alone and quiet and to come up against what cinema can offer: the screen becoming something, and then becoming something else. When that experience becomes full for you (for me silence was definitely an acquired taste), then why *not* use silence? It's cheap. And, you know, I don't really have any ideas for sound. I have enough to work with without sound. I'm a very slow maker, and I like an audience to have some time to be quiet in this busy, noisy world.

You're one of the few filmmakers who still, at least on the cans of your films, asks that the films be shown at

18 frames a second, what we used to call "silent speed." In the last generation or two of standard 16mm projectors, it's no longer possible to do 18 frames per second. How do you feel about your films being shown at 24 frames per second?

Peter Hurwitz and I call 18 frames a second "sacred speed," as opposed to "secular speed." Films that are cut for exhibition at sacred speed *need* that pacing. If you see *The Passion of Saint Joan* at 24 frames a second, the heart of it never opens. I mean you'll see something graphic going on there, but if you see it at 18, the heart opens, because of the way the rhythms were designed. When my films are shown at the wrong speed, their hearts never open. I choose where to cut from one shot to the next according to when each shot has reached the moment of ripeness. If that ripeness doesn't happen (and it's a matter of just a second), and you go on to the next shot, it's like eating too fast. There's no chance of the *next* moment being profound, because the *previous* moment didn't ripen.

Eighteen frames per second, sacred speed, is also closer to the threshold of solidity. Films originally changed to 24 frames a second because of the soundtracks, but 24 also made the image more solid. I like working on the *edge* of solidity. I like that 18 keeps films closer to the threshold of intermittence. When the projector goes at silent speed, it's more calming on my psyche, more ethereal. The noise of 24 actually gives me anxiety. In any case, I might as well do what I want. The audience is so small now, that I might as well make *myself* happy. The few places that want to show my films *can* show them well. The good places—Yann Beauvais's Light Cone in Paris, the San Francisco Cinematheque—still have the option. The Pacific Film Archive [in Berkeley] can do any increment between 12 and 24 frames a second.

When did you begin to do commercial editing?

Around 1963, when I was in New York. I was very lucky: I had a cousin in the film industry. This was a time before there were a lot of filmmakers. Now they're pouring out of the universities, and everyone's looking for a subject to make their film about. I didn't have formal training. For three years, starting when I was 19, I had a job as the projectionist for this course at the New School called "Films as a Social Comment," taught by Joseph Goldberg. He showed the canon of that period: everything from the Lumiè res to Ford, Clair, Hawks, Dreyer, Rossellini. For three years, starting when I was 19, I learned a tremendous amount. He was a wonderful teacher.

Anyway, two well-to-do women, twins, wanted to make a film about painters. They asked Goldberg if he could recommend anyone, and he recommended me. I had just made *Ingreen* and *A Fall Trip Home*; they saw them and hired me. I was young and handsome, and I'm sure I was a pleasure to have around . . . they were maybe 40 years old. So we made a film for children about Leger, Chagall, Rousseau, and Gauguin [*Where Time Is a River,* 1966, directed by Gay Mathaei]. We got to go into museums after hours, and into wealthy people's homes to shoot their paintings. I did each painter in a different way: Rousseau, I did like *Ingreen*—superimpositions of leaves and tigers; I did Leger in a very cute Eisenstein way.

Later, I was hired by Bob Young and Michael Roemer (the guys who had made *Nothing But a Man* [1964]) to help shoot and edit a four-film series based on Rudolph Arnheim's writing. Michael Housman, the successful producer, was my helping hand. I didn't do very good work for them. I did win an Emmy for the photography on another film about Gauguin for CBS [*Gauguin in Tahiti: Search for Paradise,* 1967, directed by Martin Carr], which I felt ridiculous about because they just told me what they wanted and I did it.

I tried to work on features in L.A., but it made me sick. The level of anxiety, and the struggle for money . . . after a year I realized it just wasn't me. I came back here to San Francisco, and a friend of mine, Richard Lerner, who had shot *The Cheerleaders,* was making a film about Jack Kerouac [*What Happened to Kerouac,* 1985]. I convinced him to let me shoot the footage to illustrate the audio tapes of Kerouac reading his poems. A thankless chore, because the words are so beautiful that the last thing you want is someone showing images over them. But *some* of the sequences are somewhat successful. Because of that job, I've continued to work here in the Bay Area, where we have a big conclave of documentary filmmakers because of the Film Arts Foundation. A lot of films which end up on "POV" come from here, including three or four I doctored this season.

There are films I edit for two or three months and feel they've got a little bit of my hand in them. A recent example is Owsley Brown's *Night Waltz: The Music of Paul Bowles* [1998; Dorsky edited the film, supplied the imagery of Paris and Oaxaca, and did some visual music directly on the celluloid]. But in other cases, I just come in for two weeks and help people when they're stuck. I have a reputation—even a little mythology—as a film doctor, because I've come in and "saved" people's films.

The people who make the films I doctor tend to be absorbed in the sincerity of their subject matter. But they don't have a sense of structure. They haven't seen all of Ozu's films three times. They haven't seen every Antonioni, Rossellini, and Ford film that's available, three times. I *have* this kind of depth. I've seen every Minnelli film in 35mm. I've seen every Sirk film in 35mm (including the stuff he made in Germany, like *Schlussakkord* [*Final Accord,* 1936]). I've got it all deep in me, really deep in me. During the last ten years Edith Kramer [director of the Pacific Film Archive] has been showing Borzage's silent films. They're extraordinary. They not only have deep humanity and passion, a male *and* female side, but Borzage's stories are expressed as the plasticity of cinema. They're my favorite new films now, in a certain way—my favorite films that until recently I hadn't seen! Except maybe for Jacques Becker's—my god, what a great filmmaker *he* is!

Knowing film history gives one a sense of clarity about film structure, because you've seen just about every move that can be made, and you've seen how good *those* moves can be. Actually, as I'm sure you can tell, I'm a very traditional filmmaker.

I've also been looking at avant-garde film for over 35 years. It's impossible to keep up with Stan [Brakhage], but I'd say I've seen just about everything of his, except what he's finished in the past year. And *so* many other films. I love Jack Chambers' *Hart of London* [1970]; Rudy Burckhardt's street films: *Up and Down the Waterfront* [1946], *The Climate of New York* [1948], *Under Brooklyn Bridge* [1953], *Eastside Summer* [1959]; Stan's *A Child's Garden and the Serious Sea* [1991]; Dan Barnett's *White Heart*; and, of course, the free footage of Jerry Hiler. Also, I love the ballet of George Balanchine and the novels of Henry James.

I make a living. I'll work intensely for maybe three weeks, and then I don't work for six weeks. I stay poor, but I stay me. It does take you a while to untangle your mind from those jobs before you can go back into your own film. You need walks, drugs . . . because your mind is oriented around the most decadent thing, which is using the visual world to illustrate a word-based information system. To me that's hell. I'm good at it though.

You said something before we started taping that I think is very important: that without the film industry there could be no avant-garde film, since we're dependent on the equipment and film stock that's manufactured for the industry. We avant-garde filmmakers are like poignant weeds growing up in the cracks of the sidewalk. We would not exist, if it were not for the ecosystem that supports emulsions and projectors.

Right. You can't be monastic without a world to leave. You can't be pure in comparison to nothing.
Exactly!

Scott MacDonald is working on the fourth volume of his Critical Cinema series of interviews with independent filmmakers (University of California Press), and his new book, *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Films About Place*, is due out this fall. He teaches film history at Bard College.

Thanks to Nathaniel Dorsky for providing photos.

Darrell W. Davis
Yeh Yueh-yu

WARNING! CATEGORY III

In the 1997 Hong Kong film *Intruder,* a man is kidnapped and imprisoned in his own home. He is beaten, strapped to a wheelchair with tape, and fed for several days through a straw. His tormenter is a desperate woman, a Chinese fugitive, posing as a prostitute. To deceive the neighbors, she pretends to be his relative. What does she want? When her lover arrives (also a fugitive from Mainland China) all is made horribly clear: she wants him to assume the victim's identity. Not only that, her lover is mutilated; his hands are missing as the result of a shootout with the police. "Do you see now why I wanted to keep you alive?" the kidnapper asks her victim as she approaches with a meat chopper. The scene unmercifully does not end there; there are no last-minute rescues. The victim's forearms are severed, and the killers rush to the hospital with his ID card, his limbs on ice, and a concocted story about an industrial accident.

In this tale of ruthless mainlanders, high production values and suspense carry a story of incredible xenophobia. The film frightens because it combines an allegory of the reunion with China, a tightrope walk between terror and horror, and scenes of dramatically motivated torture and dismemberment. Cast as body-snatchers, mainland Chinese seize the resources, lives, and very limbs of their vulnerable Hong Kong neighbors. The film carves out a disheartening body-politic in its narrative, style, and themes. It mercilessly exploits Hong Kong's worst paranoia about rapacious Chinese, yet the film itself is more than mere exploitation fare. There is a strong topicality about it that is almost lost in its even stronger depiction of terror and torture.

In Hong Kong, a film like *Intruder* (dir. Tseng Kam-cheong) carries a rating known as Category III, or adults-only. There are so many of these films that classifications of style (exploitation/cult film, art cinema, adult film) or genre (horror, gangster, martial arts) fail to cover them. This is also true of critical methods employed to account for these films. Category III encompasses hundreds, even thousands, of films, and this raises daunting problems. What is the proportion of these films as a ratio of total exhibition? Here are some figures from the Hong Kong Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA):

Year	Total	Category III
1988 (Nov., Dec.)	**121**	**57 (47%)**
1989	**1206**	**582 (48%)**
1990	**1294**	**524 (40.5%)**
1991	**1337**	**563 (42%)**
1992	1190	473 (39%)
1993 (through Sept.)	**1083**	**503 (46%)**
1994	879	391 (44.5%)
1995	1807	697 (38%)[1]
1996	761	298 (39%)
1997	867	376 (43%)
1998	**963**	**450 (47%)**
1999 (through Sept.)	**640**	**303 (47%)**

These figures include all films submitted for classification, including foreign films and straight-to-video releases. The figures in bold indicate the years in which Category III made up the greatest share of the material submitted to TELA. This does not mean that in 1998 and 1999, 47 percent of Hong Kong's film production was Category III, only that this was the proportion of all films released, on screen or tape. For Hong Kong

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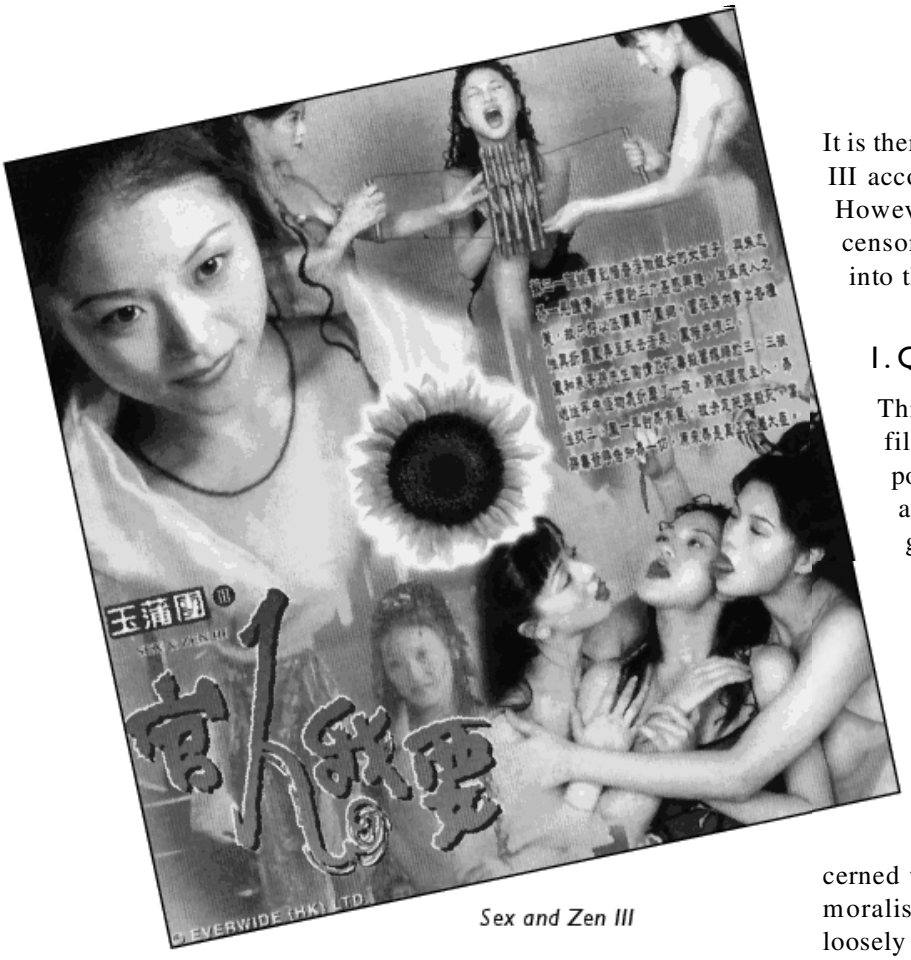
The Other Hong Kong Cinema

production, the figure would be somewhat lower. Of the 600 films reviewed in Paul Fonoroff's reference book, 65 are Category III.[2] This book covers the period from 1988 to the 1997 handover, but does not mention scores of Category III productions made during this time. A better estimate of the proportion of Category III Hong Kong productions is around 25 percent.

The sheer number of Category III is illustrated by the following: At Blockbuster (formerly the locally owned KPS), Category III makes up a large proportion of the titles on the shelves. In the KPS outlets, these were organized according to popularity. Wherever one looked in the "top 100," one could see the black triangular shape that indicates an adult film. This is distinct from the all-porno section tucked away in back. Here we refer to mainstream entertainment Hong Kong films available only to those over 18. When they are in their first run, these films also appear on screens in the major theater chains like UA Cinemas, GV (Golden Harvest), AMC, and locally run Broadway. Foreign films like *Wild Things, Another Day in Paradise, Happiness,* and *Eyes Wide Shut* also got the III rating, and they were shown in multiplexes alongside popular Hollywood and Hong Kong fare. The point is that despite the admonitory classification, there is no segregation in the theaters or on the video shelves between these and non-restricted material. *Sex and Zen III* is right there on the same shelf as Jackie Chan's *Mr. Nice Guy*.

It seems Category III occupies a dominant place in the Hong Kong film market; it takes up an inordinate amount of screen time compared to its built-in age restriction and its miniscule coverage by critics.[3] This "adult" fare represents a huge share of film entertainment in Hong Kong, and even more when small-screen formats are accounted for. Evidently these films are integral to Hong Kong media, but given their overwhelming presence they have been overlooked. In fact, Category III films are a microcosm of Hong Kong cinema as a whole, and they reveal the tug-of-war between transgression and control at work throughout Hong Kong media.



Sex and Zen III

The Other Hong Kong Films

Category III films are for adults: no one under 18 is admitted. This works as both warning and selling point. It means the film will probably contain explicit—but not hardcore—sex, gruesome violence, indecent language, or all three. Hardcore sex films are banned in Hong Kong. Porn films are Category III, but not all Category III is porn. Category III is marked out as "other," not suitable for children; and yet, it is not stigmatized, segregated, or shunned by mainstream audiences. It is a well-established, institutionalized Hong Kong film breed, and its transgressive, offensive qualities mark it as a "come-on" and serve to integrate it into the market.

Category III is an intertextual reworking of styles and genres found in Hong Kong film as a whole (which itself often reworks Hollywood film). Its reworking involves a promise of transgression: certain kinds of violence, sex, indecent language, blasphemy, brutality, and terror that are restricted to viewers over age 18. But it is not an underground or furtive production/reception practice, which gives Category III a broad range of possibilities within its restricted classification. It is therefore difficult to precisely pin down Category III according to its content, patterns, and structure. However, based on criteria set up by the Hong Kong censorship regulations, we can divide Category III into three groups.

1. Quasi-pornographic

This is how most ordinary viewers of Hong Kong film understand the term Category III. Quasi-pornographic Category III centers on scopophilia and sexual gratification. As a result, plots are organized to display female bodies and orgasm. In the first 30 minutes, audiences are guaranteed to see naked bodies, foreplay, and copulation. Another reason to call these films *quasi*-pornographic has something to do with the moralistic messages in the stories. In order to distinguish itself from the orthodox, unrepentant pornographic film and to define itself specifically as Category III, the quasi-pornographic is not merely concerned with scopophilia; it also aims for some sort of moralistic indoctrination. Many of these films are loosely based on Ching-dynasty Chinese literature and utilize the generic iconography of a period or costume film (e.g., the trope of the itinerant scholar). The association with China's historical past enables the films to endorse Confucian values and, in turn, justifies its transgression of the boundaries of sexual depiction.

In the local market, the office romance *Pretty Woman* (1991) was the first Category III smash hit, earning around HKD 30 million.[4] This type of soft-porn film achieved great box-office success in the past and has become a standard format for Category III films. The industry has so far produced many series of quasi-pornographic films, including *Sex and Zen* (1991), *Pretty Woman, Erotic Ghost Story* (1991), *The Rape* (1994), etc.

The farcical flavor of some of these films can be seen from this highlight of *Sex and Zen III* (1998): an itinerant scholar meets a provincial kung-fu master with four wives. He saves the scholar from being raped by bandits and then teaches him an entire curriculum of sexual tricks and positions contained in the "Thirteen Tricks Recorded in the Virgin Book." Each position has a name: "Frog Climbing a Stone"; "Half a Goose"; "Beating a Mountain"; "Collecting Gold Nibbles"; and the very athletic "Tiger Walking Downhill." The sequence is clearly a kung-fu parody in which women's bodies are a kind of adversary waiting to be conquered.

Regular, *bona fide* porn films are called "salty and wet" films (*ham-sup pin*), and are often referred to informally as Category IV films. These may or may not be hardcore (which are illegal) and are often imported from Japan, Macao, Taiwan, Thailand, and sometimes Korea. Western porn is available as well, but it seems to be a specialized taste and is kept completely separate. In the past, *ham-sup pin* were available in theaters and video formats; now, they are only available in old, decaying theaters located in downtown neighborhoods as well as on VCD and pay-per-view cable channels. The widespread domestic technology of VCD—video compact discs—has kept porn producers, as well as government censors, busy. Like higher quality DVDs, VCDs can be played on the CD drive of a PC or, more often, on a machine hooked up to a television monitor. Many of these machines are made in China and cost under USD 100. Most of the VCD "software" in the unofficial market is product pirated from Hollywood, Japanese, and local Hong Kong sources. Though the package usually claims the movie was copied from laserdisc, it is common for a film to be secretly videotaped in a theater, complete with people's heads blocking the screen and surrounding chatter. Then it is transferred to CD. This practice has destroyed the traditional clearance system of ancillary markets. Transnational and locally run multiplexes (i.e., the globalized film distribution and exhibition circuits) do not carry *bona fide* porn films, only Category III.

2. Genre films

Almost any Hong Kong genre can be revisited with an adult Category III treatment. These include gangster and crime films like *Casino* (1998), *Organized Crime and Triad Bureau* (1994), *9413* (1998); *Women on the*

DVD
Executive Producer:
Stanley Kwan
Director:
Julian Lee
Starring
Aimee Wong Patrick Tse
Gigi Lai Wong Hei
Andrew Lien Ben Ng
the accident
INTRUDER
恐怖症
CHINA STAR ENTERTAINMENT GROUP
中國星集團
羅卓瑤 作品
誘僧
TEMPTATION OF A MONK
A CLARA LAW FILM

Run (1993); and the fourth in the hit triad series *Young and Dangerous* (1997), rated Category III for foul language. Chow Yun-fat appeared in a number of ultra-violent gangster films like *Triads*: *The Inside Story* (1989), and even squeaky-clean Jackie Chan starred in the brutal prison film *Island of Fire* (1991).[5]

In Hong Kong Category III there is of course horror, though not as many films as one might expect (*Skin Striperess* [sic]; *Bloody Beast*; *Ghost Killer*). There are campy detective thrillers like *Naked Killer* (1992) and its many spinoffs; art films like Jacob Cheung's *Cageman* (1992), scored for foul language, the Peter Chan-produced "yuppie" drama *Twenty-Something* (1994), and Julian Lee's *The Accident* (1998); Derek Yee's reflexive, sophisticated *Viva Erotica* (1996); Clara Law's *Temptation of a Monk* (1993); and Wong Kar-wai's *Happy Together* (1997). Yu Lik-wai's 1999 Cannes festival entry *Love Will Tear Us Apart* is also Category III. Even children's films are represented, in a way, with teenage-girl dramas like *The Fruit Is Swelling I-III* (1997) and *Pink Lady* (1992), which, though restricted for teenage audiences, still include "cutesy" conventions from Japanese *anime,* teen fashions, adolescent shyness, and other juvenile matters. Producers may not intend these films for young audiences, but they appropriate juvenile elements as a perverse adult reworking of conventions associated with young peoples' films. *Pink Lady* later turns into a violent lesbian love triangle, following its setting in a repressed Catholic girls school (making it a variation on prison films).

Although the address of Category III films seems predominantly male, they also solicit female or gender-ambiguous audiences. This can be seen in the "high" eroticism of art films by directors like Derek Yee, Wong Kar-wai, and Stanley Kwan. Aside from artistic considerations, it is good business to target a larger audience—young women—if the under-18s are automatically out of reach. But it is impossible to slice cleanly between stories that target men and those meant for women. As Carol Clover convincingly argues of identification in the horror film, "gender is less a wall than a permeable membrane."[6] One could say the same about the "membrane" between Category III and other kinds of films.

Women on the Run (dir. Corey Yuen and David Lai) is a cop thriller that incorporates scopophilia and women's bodies, but it is also a potent female action film. The opening flashback from the heroine's point of view boasts an active, powerful protagonist with clear motivations, goals, and desires. She wants to escape her village and get to Hong Kong, but her boyfriend pimps her in Guangzhou instead. When a john disrespects her kung-fu trophy (by urinating in it), she thoroughly thrashes him; then, under the influence of heroin, she "accidentally" kills her boyfriend. There are many innovative action sequences that downplay sexual display of women's bodies in favor of athleticism and skill, and the action sequences always take priority over nudity and sexual situations. A violent gang rape is shot to maximize the woman's terror and pain rather than the satisfaction taken by her attackers. The scene does not stoop to the porn convention, common in Hong Kong cinema, of portraying rape as consensual.[7] Location work in China and Canada consolidates the theme of exploitative patriarchy as a cultural universal—no matter where these women run, whether they go to the law or underground, they are brutally suppressed by men.

Category III recapitulates the major genres and styles of Hong Kong cinema as a whole, feeding upon established conventions even when it upends them. It also relies on significant crossover of directors, talent, and formulae. The starlet of the moment, Shu Qi, "graduated" from a Category III background and starred in films like Jackie Chan's *Gorgeous* (1998). She also appeared in Stanley Kwan's *The Island Tales* (1999) and recently completed Hou Hsiao-hsien's Cannes entry, *Millennium Mambo* (2001). In many cases the distinction between the general audience (IIB) and the restricted (III) is arbitrary and feeble. An exploitation auteur such as Wong Jing works comfortably on either side of this shifting boundary, and indeed exploits it. On the other hand, the designation is not for nothing, because there is often something truly disturbing about many Category III films. These darker elements crop up most often in the third group.

3. "Pornoviolence"

This term comes from the title of a Tom Wolfe essay written for *Esquire* just before the release of *Bonnie and Clyde*.[8] It seems an appropriate name for a special case: films that, unlike porn and genre films, may be unique to Category III. They include gruesome murder cases from police files, such as the story of the last criminals to be hanged in Hong Kong, *Sentenced to Hang* (1989), *The Braemar Hill Murders* (1992), *Daughter of Darkness I-III* (1994), *The Sweet Smell of Death* (1993), *Legal Innocence* (1993), *The Untold Story I-III* (1993), *Dr. Lamb* (1992), *The Tuen Mun Rapist I-III* (1994), *Horrible High Heels* (1995), *Intruder, Red to Kill* (1994), *Remains of a Woman* (1993), *O.C.T.B. Case—The Floating Body* (1995). They also include sadistic period pictures such as *Ancient*

Red to Kill

Chinese Whorehouse (1994) and *The Chinese Torture Chamber I* and *II* (1994).

Taken together, these are the most appalling and sensational Category III films. Speaking of the sadistic period films, Stephen Sze calls them "morally provoking," because they contain "frightening sequences of sexual torture" and "could hardly be excused because there were certain points of historical interest. It is really doubtful that this kind of sexual violence and perversity should be allowed to be resurrected in the form of Category III cinema."[9] Yet the first installment of *The Chinese Torture Chamber* earned HKD 10.4 million, making it virtually a mainstream film, with respect to box office at least. *Ancient Chinese Whorehouse* took in HKD 2.5 million. The cruelty and raw misogyny of these films is really alarming; they would cause an uproar in the West were they accessible "above ground." The ingenuity with which narrative, style, and special effects combine to wrest excruciating pain from naked heroines raises issues about the appetite for sexual violence in Hong Kong media, something which is debated in Hong Kong on a regular basis. One local critic puts it this way:

> What makes movies like *Love to Kill* (1993) especially disturbing is that these are not fringe exploitation pictures but mainstream Cantonese movies with mainstream casts and mainstream behind-the-scenes personnel shown at mainstream theater chains. There's a Ph.D. thesis waiting to be written on the subject of what these films say about Hong Kong society, particularly the status of women and the popular perception of our legal system. . . . Lurid, sleazy, and disgusting, it's hard to imagine how *Love to Kill* can miss at the box office.[10]

The "case file" films use shocking criminal events as justification for the depiction of violence, torture, and sexual perversion. For instance, *The Untold Story* is about a psychotic serial murderer who uses chopsticks to rape his employee and then turns her body into roast pork and feeds it to his customers. *Horrible High Heels* features a killer tanner who flays his victims in order to make and sell shoes. The sequel to *The Untold Story* has a psychotic serial murderer again, though this time it is a woman and a ravenous Chinese mainlander. Anthony Wong, who won the Best Actor prize at the Hong Kong Film Awards as the killer in the original *Untold Story,* plays the cop in the sequel. *The Tuen Mun Rapist* series skillfully depicts a public housing estate as a Chinese box of identical corridors and elevators—tricks of acoustics conjure disembodied voices while shadows and blind corners enable the rapist to be everywhere and nowhere in an architecture of paranoia and indifference where rape is easily committed and concealed.

This type of Category III film, especially the "true stories" supposedly rescued from police files, begs for some kind of psychoanalytic interpretation. The least pleasurable in terms of escapist entertainment value, they are nonetheless topical for Hong Kong audiences and provide a thrill of recognition. The stories have a "ripped from the headlines" immediacy and sensationalism that satisfies tabloid appetites, like Warners' gritty gangster films addressed to working-class audiences in the 1930s.[11] But they have a special kinship to Category III because their gruesome events resist easy recuperation within standard gangster, detective, or thriller genres. They resemble horror films, but they lack the fantasy or supernatural safety-catch that brackets the terrible things shown and told in such films. The lack of generic "defenses" makes these films genuinely

chilling, yet their recognition value also makes them fascinating to local audiences, and they have enjoyed major success at the box office.

These films have corporeal obsessions that go beyond titillating representations of sexuality. If pornography, broadly speaking, is based on the "frenzy of the visible," Category III case studies like *The Untold Story* investigate processes of mutilation and dismemberment at their most *surgical*. These stories, unlike porn, are *literally* about objectification, the stages by which living human bodies are turned into something else: inanimate things that are sectioned into small pieces, consumed by acid, or slowly roasted over an open fire. Murder, the climax of narrative structure in crime thrillers or detective fiction, is just the beginning. The real fascination here is less with killing, which is merely a pretext, than with how human bodies are disposed of. Methodical dismemberment is often a highlight, as is cannibalism (or both). If Lacan maintains a strict division between scopophilia and other sensory pleasures, then cannibalism offers an ingenious, appalling solution to the disposition of bodies, putting them literally "out of sight."[12] Black humor is often used to leaven what are barely tolerable suggestions of "treatment" of the recently dead. Making the necessary adjustment, one might compare these corporeal obsessions with Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle,* set in a modern meat-packing plant, in which a character watches live hogs instantly turned into hams and other useful products.[13]

The distinction between living being and useful, satisfying object is abruptly erased. This is the case with the rape films as well, where women's bodies function as prey or products to be consumed; the quasi-porn and sadistic period films also employ this premise. Beginning in the 1970s, there was a cycle of American exploitation films similarly fascinated by disclosure of human flesh or meat as a problem of vision, appetite, and incorporation: "The evolution of the human-sausage theme is typical of the back-and-forth borrowing in low horror," writes Carol Clover. "*Texas Chainsaw Massacre* hints at it; *Motel Hell* turns it into an industry ('Farmer Vincent's Smoked Meats: This is It!' proclaims a local billboard); and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre II* expands it to a statewide chili-tasting contest."[14] The *reductio ad absurdum* of rationalized Taylorization is revealed in these films' obsession with corporeal "processing." Could the absurdities of advanced, overheated capitalism have something to do with recycling, from enemy to waste to a profitable raw material, à la *The Untold Story*? Do endless sequels of exploitation cycles themselves exemplify this?

The often comic ingenuity with which criminals dispose of bodies in these films contradicts the cruelty doled out to victims while they are still alive. Cruelty, depravity, and horror are taken to exquisite extremes, and belie the casual transition from unbelievable malice to a calm, workmanlike pride in the dispatch of a human carcass. An example is *Legal Innocence,* about a serial killer who keeps pieces of his victims stored in

Horrible High Heels

his refrigerator. The perpetrator in this film is so evil that he doesn't even need to kill his victim. He manages this by dropping his girlfriend's puppy into a large pot of boiling soup, then he asks her rival to serve her a bowl for supper. When his girlfriend finds pieces of her pet in the soup, she goes berserk and kills the other woman. As a favor to his shaken girlfriend, the psychotic hero kindly helps her dispose of the body.

The point here is not simply the composure with which the psychopath performs his deeds, but the regressive vengeance he elicits from otherwise normal people. The primitive, uncontrollable rage of his girlfriend, and the consequent murder, is completely understandable. Another film, *The Underground Banker* (1993), a revenge tale against sadistic loan sharks, trades on the contagion of rage. A mild-mannered truck driver moves his family into a new neighborhood, where they are vulnerable to criminal and community exploitation. His atavistic descent into a revenge frenzy is the transformative exchange of total humiliation for a visceral triumph over his enemies. The neighborhood, with a single exception, is presented as a kind of chorus, with people in the housing estate and playground constantly watching, but never getting actively involved in anyone else's business. The "I-can't-take-it-anymore" rage of the despised, downtrodden working man is justified on the basis of vengeance as simple survival. But only when he stands up for his own survival, with the help of a scary next-door psychopath (a reference to *Dr. Lamb*), will the community finally step into a supportive role; for all but the last few minutes of the film, it is a Darwinian snake pit.

A final consideration is the pseudo-justification such films enjoy from "documentary" truth claims. These claims are based on police reports that were suppressed ("The *Untold* Story"; "The *Unpublicizable* File"), on the assumption they were too horrible to be told. Now that they are brought to light, they serve the purpose of . . . community catharsis? cautionary tales? bureaucratic misinformation brought to light by zealous, investigative filmmakers? What is at stake when such films claim to be, no matter how frivolously, based on a true story? One factor is similar to the pseudo-justification of the quasi-porn films: depictions of explicit sexuality offered along with Confucian morality. Another is the contemporary currency of these tales. These are retellings of stories that people in Hong Kong already know by rumor, innuendo, and gossip. They are pre-sold, in a way, just as they are pre-censored. The bureaucratic, colonial suppression by police and the courts is itself the draw that filmmakers use to attract audiences: "The story they didn't want you to hear." The Category III classification itself works the same way: "The films they don't want you to see," which is a special kind of invitation. This is an example of how regulation and censorship of "anti-social" material can be turned into enticement.[15] In addition, these stories have been covered, particularly in the Chinese press, to maximize their shock and titillation; they work as urban folklore, capitalizing on shared community curiosity about local, suppressed, and therefore celebrated cases of depravity.

The pre-censored aspect of Category III reminds us that media regulation is itself a type of representation or interface between commodity entertainment and public culture. Regulation and censorship is already a "reading" of media products on behalf of various publics. The history of regulation in Hong Kong is governed not only by the commercialism of the media, but also by colonial legal structures.

Category III and Legal Transgressions

The present system of film classification was established in a climate of controversy and alarm. For years, there was a sense of mistrust—in the industry and the public—that colonial censorship was not operating in good faith. That intimation was embarrassingly confirmed in 1987, when it was revealed that film censorship, practiced since 1953, was illegal and that the government knew this to be the case as early as 1972.[16] Nevertheless, censorship continued because of Hong Kong's geo-cultural proximity, and vulnerability, to both China and Taiwan. Between 1973 and 1987, 20 films were banned outright because they were thought to be damaging to relations with China. Under pressure, the government administratively introduced a three-tier film classification scheme in 1987, ruling out a legislative amendment for a film censorship bill that might be challenged in court.

There are now two laws governing film censorship in Hong Kong: classification of motion pictures by admissable audience and by the regulation of offensive material in public view. The former is found in the ordinances on the film ratings system, Chapter 392, the Film Censorship Ordinance (1988, rev. 1994). Indecent articles circulating in public, like VCDs, are regulated by Chapter 390, the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance (1963). With the introduction of film classification, a new range of subject matter was introduced, along with new meanings activated by audience expectations primed by the ratings themselves. Richard Maltby explains these two enablers of diversification in American film: "Designed

as a means of labeling movies according to the degree of explicitness in their representation of sex, violence or language, the ratings system became a marketing device, inciting such representations up to the limits of the permissible. . . . Mainstream Hollywood's move into the production of high-budget exploitation movies in the early 1970s would not have been possible without ratings."[17] What was true for the introduction of an American ratings system in 1968 was also true in Hong Kong 20 years later.

Since 1987, all films shown in Hong Kong have been classified as either I (all audiences); II (not suitable for children); or III ("Approved for exhibition only to persons who have attained the age of 18 years"). The distinction between Categories I and II is an advisory one only; no one will stop children from attending a Category II film. A 1994 amendment subdivided the classification into IIA, segregating children from young persons, and IIB, films deemed not suitable for either children or young persons. Most U.S. films rated R are classified in Hong Kong as IIB. Still, children and young people cannot be excluded from a IIB film. In addition, the 1994 amendment dropped the clause relating to political censorship: whether a film was damaging to good relations with China.

Paragraph 10 of the Film Censorship Ordinance sets out the first two factors when classifying films submitted:

> (a) Whether the film portrays, depicts, or treats cruelty, torture, violence, crime, horror, disability, sexuality, or indecent or offensive language or behavior; and
>
> (b) Whether the film denigrates or insults any particular class of the public by reference to the color, race, religious belief, or ethnic or national origins or the sex of the member of that class.

Though the law wants to be cut-and-dried, producers and distributors work closely with censors in order to balance topical entertainment value with maximum exposure. An informal system of checks, balances, and haggling seems to be in place. Category III is the only kind of film that requires exclusion of minors. Because of this, and because exhibitors can sell tickets to I, IIA, and IIB films without restriction, the IIB/III boundary is the place where the most energetic negotiations take place. Box offices are barred by law from admitting minors into a Category III film, resulting in a greatly reduced audience pool, while differences between I, IIA, and IIB are advisory ones only; no questions are asked for ticket-selling purposes. A patron buys a ticket for a Category III film and passes through the entrance; if it is a multiplex, an usher stands outside the door of the hall, re-checking tickets and ID cards. Before the film begins, a warning trailer is played in Cantonese and English to the sound of breaking glass: "Government warning: This film has been classified as Category III by the TELA. Persons under the age 18 should leave the auditorium. If any person under 18 is found viewing the Category III film, and so causes the cinema management to be prosecuted by the police or TELA, the management reserves the right to take civil action against that person." The English warning ends there, but there is an additional reminder in Cantonese: "The violator shall be held responsible for the fine incurred."

This warning trailer indicates to those already seated in the theater that *they* are responsible if there are prosecutions for allowing entry to minors. It is not only the exhibitor, but the offending minor who is culpable as well. This is a telling strategy: threaten to fine the customer of an exhibitor in violation of Chapter 392. It is similar to "john" laws that prosecute prostitutes' clients as well as the purveyors of illicit sex. But once an underage offender is safely seated and hears this announcement, will he identify himself and ask to be re-seated in a more suitable theater? In theory, perhaps. In practice, this warning trailer works to remind patrons of whatever age that they are about to be exposed to a certain amount of "cruelty, torture, violence, crime, horror, disability, sexuality, or indecent or offensive language or behavior." And because it is a Category III film, it is likely that a certain kind of representation, calculated to push the bounds of taste, will be on display.

The Hong Kong classification system thus enables the restricted, and therefore "safe," circulation of upsetting or degenerate fare. It was implemented during the colonial period, following the 1984 Joint Declaration returning Hong Kong to China. The Film Censorship ordinance (1988) was enacted at a time of great suspicion about Britain's intentions regarding Hong Kong's future. Censorship of Hong Kong's media is a form of control that was colonial until 1997, but continues today under what may be called an "alternative Chineseness"[18]—alternative politically to the respective parties of the mainland and Taiwan, but strongly inclined post-1997 toward the former. This is balanced historically by Hong Kong's British period, in which there was mutual dependency: psychological dependence on Chinese goodwill, and economic dependence on British capitalism.[19] Present-day censorship in Hong Kong reflects this multi-faceted process: it was initially

smuggled through executive channels into legislation and drafted by British colonizers appealing to Chinese values. Now, it regulates and mostly protects freedom of expression in a Chinese popular medium profoundly indebted to Hollywood. It operates within a para-democratic system of government which must pay homage to Communist Beijing.

Category III: Microcosm of Hong Kong Media

In the long run, Category III transgressions will help consolidate moving-image regulation in Hong Kong. Category III, whose unsavory and anti-social representations are conspicuous under puritanical Communist censorship, is a perfect excuse for government intervention. Furthermore, its VCD manifestations invite scrutiny from customs and copyright enforcement authorities working on behalf of global trade agreements to which China is becoming a party.[20]

Category III is not just a "boil" on the media "body" of Hong Kong, but an organic part that rises and falls with the whole.[21] As of 1999, the Hong Kong film industry was in a deep slump, which began in 1993. Since then, the industry has lost 60 percent of its revenue; in 1998, box office for Hong Kong movies was the lowest it had been in 10 years (HKD 420 million). In 1993, revenues were at HKD 1.13 billion and production went from 234 films in 1993 to 92 in 1998.[22] Twenty thousand film industry workers, moreover, were left jobless. In 1999, the film industry fared even worse, but perceptions in the industry and government are now cautiously optimistic.

This situation is due to aggressive marketing by American majors, the defection of major local talents, a crisis of faith in the production talent that remains, and the proliferation of VCDs. Furthermore, the largest video chain, KPS, declared a humiliating bankruptcy in September 1998 because of over-expansion, bad debts, and poor management.[23] This gave the American giant Blockbuster a foot in the door. But in the meantime, consumption patterns changed—for many in Hong Kong, it is more common to buy than to rent. For the price of a single Blockbuster rental one can buy VCDs of all kinds, legal and bootleg, foreign and domestic, adult and children's fare. The regulatory structure, which favors traditional large corporations, made room for the infiltration of VCDs by outlaw entrepreneurs and small shopkeepers. The VCD phenomenon has made Hong Kong image culture a moving target: fluid, unpredictable, protean, and legally dubious.

Anti-porn clampdown on VCDs (October 15, 1999)

Before the closure of KPS, two markets emerged for video consumption, one official (videotape rental chains), and another unofficial (VCDs for sale at low prices in small stalls on the street and in residential shopping malls). It usually takes three months or so for a Hong Kong film to be released on tape. Pirate VCDs often come to market even before a film's theatrical debut (being duped in the U.S., Taiwan, or Japan). Under pressure from exhibitors, distributors recently agreed to officially release films to tape and VCD only one month after theatrical release. When Blockbuster took over KPS and restructured their inventory, VCDs gradually took over tapes as the main attraction in the stores, for rent and for sale. There has also been a crackdown on many of the stalls that handled bootleg VCDs.

For a free-trade port, Hong Kong arguably has the worst television in the world, and not coincidentally, one of the best selections of VCDs. VCD culture, legal, illegal, and in-between, is booming in Hong Kong because film and television culture is so very slack. The technology allows fast, mass production of discs that are cheaper to buy than renting a tape. In spite of the low quality of these discs, people embrace them: ubiquitous, up-to-date, and so cheap they are practically disposable. Consumers say they choose the VCD format over theatrical film because it is private, convenient, and interactive—even more so than tape.[24] Instead of following Japan and North America's coercive conversion to DVD technology, Hong Kong, Taiwan, PRC, and Southeast Asia have come up with their own low-cost alternative. In this regard, the VCD is "Third World guerilla-technology," offering options outside, and in defiance of, the major entertainment circuits.[25] It allows users autonomy from the corporate dictates of major theater chains—including video rental chains—and broadcast schedules alike.

Hollywood blockbusters on the big screen still attract audiences. At the same time, audiences say they have been betrayed by Hong Kong film producers, whose lackluster, derivative product makes VCD knockoffs all the more attractive. If a film is entertaining, then the poor picture and inferior sound of illegal VCDs are an intolerable distraction.[26] But if a film is dull, then the knockoff's price—half the cost of a single movie ticket—is an irresistible enticement. Furthermore, it takes practice to distinguish bootlegs from legal, higher quality discs. In a March 1999 poll, 77.6 percent of respondents said the downturn in the film industry was attributable to poor production, not piracy.[27] On March 17, all 75 of the major cinema exhibitors closed their doors to protest the weak enforcement of copyright laws, and a 1600-person rally by prominent entertainers, including Jackie Chan, made its concerns known to the government. The last time the film industry came out in such force was in early 1992, to protest triad infiltration.[28]

VCD as an outlaw and throwaway technology is relatively unregulated—for now. An indication of the use and notoriety that VCDs enjoy is the extensive coverage they receive in Chinese newspapers. Reviews of Category III VCDs appear regularly in Chinese newspapers. All popular tabloids have sections devoted to these and other types of VCD material. Each disc is described, given an overall rating, and readers are given time code telling them where all the juicy bits are so their players can be programmed to go straight to the chase (admittedly, these discs are usually bona fide porn films rather than Category III films screened in theaters). Sex coverage overall in Chinese papers is extensive, with a whole spread of pornographic fiction, large pictures of starlets, and practical tips on seduction and sexual technique. Watchdog groups like the True Light Society, the Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service, and the teachers' union often protest the salacious content in the papers, targeting aggressive, tasteless gossip sections with paparazzo photos.[29]

In 1999 there were numerous calls from educators and bureaucrats to regulate the baser impulses of tabloid photojournalism. The government was giving serious thought to establishing a statutory press council that would censure publications crossing the line with photo-features on promiscuous stars, suicidal youth—or wayward officials. In a November survey, over 1000 journalists from Chinese papers claimed to be more concerned about media sex and violence than about privacy violations.[30] One ill-fated government proposal would have required all newspapers with sexual content to print their edition with a large red slash across every page.[31] Community leaders imagined this would damage Hong Kong's reputation as a free society. Still, adult, exploitative material, whether on television or in newspapers and "over-the-counter" varieties like VCDs, continues to be hotly contested, as people challenge both media and government to respect their wishes.[32] There are proposals to prosecute buyers of illegal VCDs; police do prosecute purveyors of VCD porn, but they cannot keep up with the volume. In April 1999 there were 20 cases heard in North Kowloon Court, while in May and June there were over 200 cases.[33] Meanwhile, VCD pirates continue to ply their trade, on street corners and in shopping malls. Such debates have much greater political urgency than they did before 1997: the independence of Hong

Kong's media, including sleazy tabloids, pirated discs, and Category III, is regarded as a bellwether for the rule of law in post-colonial Hong Kong.[34]

What do Category III films signify about Hong Kong media generally? On the one hand, these adult films face the same threats as the rest: declining audiences, VCD pirates (especially competition from foreign porn), talent without ideas and critical derision. On the other, could these films be recession-resistant due to low budgets and their strong presence in cheap, private formats? VCD players cost less than half the price of a VCR. For some people, watching Category III at home may be preferable to seeing them in theaters. That depends, however, on whether spectators share their domestic space with family, which in congested Hong Kong is highly probable. If watching *Raped by an Angel* at home with mother-in-law sounds less than appetizing, perhaps going to the cinema is a bargain at twice the cost.[35] These films, as we argued above, are not stigmatized in Hong Kong film exhibition; yet they are literally "marked" as potentially shocking. This gives them a certain advantage in a harsh commercial environment, offering a way to overcome the handicap restricting the size of their audience. A warning also works as a temptation, and perhaps as a dare.

Pornologists

In the U.S., as Thomas Doherty has observed, "movies reflect teenage, not mass—and definitely not adult—tastes."[36] Hong Kong Category III definitely does not appeal to mass taste. But by its very definition, as well as its high exhibition share, it violates the last of three criteria for "exploitation film" set out by Doherty: timely, sensational, or controversial subject matter, very low budgets; and a youth market.[37] Category III may be an "adult" film classification, but it is plainly more than just porn; the III classification by itself does not give away what kind of film one may encounter. Issues of approach and method arise: How to sort out such a large number of works? A number of options present themselves: genre, especially relating to exploitation film;[38] psychoanalytic/ideological, especially feminist readings;[39] research on audience response that measures thresholds of graphic violence or sexuality;[40] and so on.

In recent years, adult films have come in for serious academic, mostly feminist, treatment. Mainstream publications like *The New Yorker* have commented on this scholarly attention, its researchers labeled "pornologists," in an article called "The Loose Canon" (March 29, 1999).[41] The article quotes Laura Kipnis, author of "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading Hustler," who admits, "I don't really like pornography. I'm disturbed, unsettled by it. I look at small numbers of examples and make big generalities. But I'm interested in things that disturb me." The writer then facetiously likens Kipnis's disquiet to the kind of disturbance he experienced in his college course, "The Modern Sensibility," from writers like Marcuse, Freud, and Burroughs.

Hong Kong Category III films go well beyond disturbance; they are often a somatic challenge. They dare us to keep eyes open, to discover whether the atrocities promised will really unfold before our eyes. It is the promise and the tease, not the delivery, that ruthlessly taps an audience's most private dread. And the Category III classification itself is a kind of cipher for the most forbidden of bodily yearnings. These films are like a blind masseur: they offer strong stimulation despite, or because of, their handicap. They are shocking, for reasons one might expect, but surprising too for their level of energy, imagination, and outrageousness. These films, no less than works by better known and more presentable auteurs like Jackie Chan and Ann Hui, can be just as entertaining, and are intrinsic to Hong Kong cinema. If we want to understand the industry as a whole, we must take the other Hong Kong cinema into account.

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Notes

1. Reprinted from Maria Barbieri, M. Phil. thesis, Hong Kong University, 1997, p. 127. The remaining figures are supplied by TELA.
2. Paul Fonoroff, *At the Hong Kong Movies: 600 Reviews from 1988 till the Handover* (Hong Kong: Film Biweekly, 1998).
3. They are disdained, but not totally neglected by local critics: Li Cheuk-to, Ng Chun Bong, Stephen Sze, and Hong Kong University graduate Verdy Leung have all written on aspects of Category III. A historical introduction to Hong Kong soft porn is Cheng Yu, "Lu Qi: Softcore Sex and Hardcore Morality," *A Study of Hong Kong Cinema in the Seventies* (Urban Council, 1984), pp. 101-2.
4. Stephen Sze, "The Characteristics and Fate of the Commercial Porn-Films of Hong Kong in the 90s," unpublished conference paper, "Asia at the Crossroads," Hong Kong, November 1998. Any film that tops HKD 10 million (around USD 1.3 million) is considered a hit today, though that figure was higher in the early 1990s. HKD 5 million is an av-

erage production budget for A pictures, while B pictures, including many Category III, average half that or even less.

5. Regarding gangster and prison films, recall here that the Production Code of America was repeatedly revised in light of the popularity of both late-20s silent gangster films (Sternberg's *Underworld* and *The Docks of New York*) and the cycle of Warner Brothers' gangster films of the 1930s. J. Hoberman, "A Test for the Individual Viewer: *Bonnie and Clyde*'s Violent Reception," in J. Goldstein, ed., *Why We Watch: The Attractions of Violent Entertainment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 118-120.
6. Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 46.
7. See Sally Stockbridge, "Sexual Violence and Hong Kong Films: Regulation and Cultural Difference," in *Media Information Australia* 74 (1994), pp. 86-92, for a cultural account of rape fantasies in Hong Kong cinema. She implies that abundant Japanese porn, anime, and comics, very popular in Hong Kong, are the source.
8. Hoberman, p. 120.
9. Sze, "The Characteristics and Fate of the Commercial Porn-Films," p. 4.
10. Fonoroff, p. 350. *Love to Kill* made just under HKD 3 million.
11. John Belton, *American Cinema, American Culture* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1994), p. 73. On the question of class, see Julian Stringer, "Category 3: Sex and Violence in Postmodern Hong Kong," in *Mythologies of Violence in Postmodern Media,* ed. Christopher Sharrett (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1999).
12. Stephen Heath, "Body, Voice," *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1981), p. 177.
13. Tom Gunning also cites "Mr. Dooley," Peter Finley Dunne's Irish dialect character who echoes the wonder of Sinclair's miraculous meat factory: "A cow goes lowin' softly into Armours and comes out glue, gelatine, fertylizer, celooloid, joolry, sofy cushions, hair restorer, washin' sody, soap, lithrachoor, and bed springs, so quick that while aft she's still a cow for'ard she may be anything fr'm buttons to pannyma hats." Cited in "Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema," in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life,* ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), p. 17.
14. Clover, p. 25.
15. Suppressing real-life gangsters and criminal behavior on American screens has a long history. The MPAA had a proscription against representations of historical gangsters, which was only violated in 1957, with Don Siegel's *Baby Face Nelson*. See Hoberman, p.120.
16. The *Asian Wall Street Journal* (March 17, 1987) leaked internal government documents that showed officials were suppressing evidence establishing there was absolutely no statutory basis for government film censorship. Nevertheless, the government had acted continuously to restrict, cut, and ban films in the colony since 1953. The resulting furor mostly concerned the issue of political censorship, which meant the colonial government had suppressed exhibition of any film thought to be "prejudicial to good relations with other territories." In practice this meant avoiding offense to China, even at the cost of illegally regulating film exhibition.
17. Richard Maltby, "Post-classical Historiographies and Consolidated Entertainment," *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema,* ed. Steve Neale and Murray Smith (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 33.
18. Barbieri, p. 9. She uses this term for the colonial provision of Chineseness, which continues after 1997. Despite the 50-year statute of autonomy for Hong Kong's legal and social systems, it is apparent to us that Hong Kong's alternative Chinese character is rapidly dissolving into that of the PRC.
19. Barbieri, p. 4.
20. "Mainland music piracy booming," *South China Morning Post*, June 15, 2000. Continuing piracy is indicated by the vast overproduction capacity in places like Taiwan—3.9 billion—whose domestic demand for CDs is only 190 million. In Hong Kong, the ratio is 2.8 billion vs. 140 million; in China it is 680 million vs. 620 million. Taiwan and Hong Kong continue to be major suppliers of illegal discs to the world.
21. See Stringer for a similar point, pp. 361-79.
22. *South China Morning Post,* March 21, 1999; May 7, 1999. 1999 was even worse: box office overall was down 16.7 percent from 1998 in the first 11 months of the year, the lowest attendance at the movies in 20 years. *Hong Kong Economic Journal,* December 10, 1999.
23. Subsequently KPS was taken to court by disgruntled customers holding worthless coupons, and the company lost.
24. Focus interviews with ten Baptist University students, September-December 1999.
25. VCD Japanese *dorama* (whole seasons of Japanese melodrama and comedy recorded via satellite, subtitled and nicely packaged in Taiwan) are available in box sets. Students and young people are addicted to the high production values, music, and cliffhanger structure that the VCD package format offers.
26. Poor quality is not a factor in music CD piracy, which takes a bigger bite (around 35 percent, down from 50 percent in 1998) from the local music industry. Hong Kong is not only a worldwide distributor, it also exported a complete CD copy/stamping shop to Paraguay, where it turned out thousands of Latin-American music fakes for three months before being shut down (TVB news, November 4, 1999). See also note 20.
27. *South China Morning Post,* March 19, 1999.
28. *South China Morning Post,* March 21, 1999. Triads are very well represented in illegal VCD operations.
29. "Warnings Urged for 'Indecent' Papers," *South China Morning Post,* April 15, 1999. In September 1998 there was a protest outside the ATV (Asia Television) studios by parents upset by excessive violence and adult material on broadcast television.
30. "Sex, Violence Top Media's Concerns," *South China Morning Post,* November 27, 1999.
31. "Action on porn 'could hurt image overseas,'" *South China Morning Post,* June 15, 2000.
32. It appears that most protests against unsavory material center on advertising, television and newspapers, not film or video. See Stockbridge, p. 90. VCDs, however, are very much in the sights of protesters and regulators.
33. "Tough Penalties Urged Against Porn Sellers," *South China Morning Post,* October 9, 1999.
34. Cheung Man-yee, the director of RTHK (Radio Television Hong Kong), was "promoted" to a trade post in Tokyo

months after she allowed the Taiwanese envoy to discuss President Lee Teng-hui's "two states" theory on a radio show. This is widely seen by Hong Kong journalists and media watchers as a preemptive strike by the government against the independence championed by Ms. Cheung. Even the U.S. Senate discussed her transfer in hearings on the rule of law in Hong Kong (*South China Morning Post,* October 30, 1999).

35. For an explicit "blow by blow" account of this film, see Stockbridge. Her pro-feminist description is calculated to lend credibility to Australian censorship criteria, and therefore renders the film more shockingly exploitative than it really is. For Category III films like the *Raped by an Angel* series (by now there are five installments), S/M, rape, torture, and violations of women's bodies are expected as a generic requirement of teasing and play with audience expectations. Although Stockbridge's reading appears accurate and socially responsible, she implies the superiority of Australian censorship over Hong Kong's for its feminist sensibility. Our problem with her account is that it reveals a gap in cross-cultural reading that fails to take a local visual culture (including reading strategies as well as representations) into consideration. Stockbridge's description is pornographic; the film is not.
36. Thomas Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), p. 1.
37. Doherty, pp. 3-10. Eric Schaefer, in contrast, lists four characteristics of what he calls "classical exploitation": forbidden topics, low budgets (with production values to match), a small number of circulating prints, and independent distribution and exhibition. *Bold! Daring! Shocking! True! A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 5-6.
38. Doherty, op. cit.; Schaefer, op. cit.; Doherty, *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality and Insurrection in American Cinema 1930-1934* (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1999); Mike Quarles, *Down and Dirty: Hollywood's Exploitation Filmmakers and Their Movies* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1993); David Frasier, *Russ Meyer, the Life and Films* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1990); Richard Meyers, *For One Week Only: The World of Exploitation Films* (Piscataway, N.J.: New Century Publishers, 1983).
39. Laura Kipnis, *Bound and Gagged: Pornography and the Politics of Fantasy in America* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999); Kipnis, "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading *Hustler*," *Cultural Studies,* ed. Nelson, Treichler, Grossberg (N.Y.: Routledge, 1992), pp. 373-91; Eithne Johnson, "Excess and Ecstasy: Constructing Female Pleasure in Porn Movies," *Velvet Light Trap* 32 (Fall 1993), pp. 30-50; Carol Clover, *Men, Women and Chainsaws*; Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989).
40. Jeffrey Goldstein (ed.), *Why We Watch: The Attractions of Violent Entertainment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Annette Hill, *Shocking Entertainment: Viewer Response to Violent Movies* (Bedfordshire, U.K.: University of Luton Press, 1997).
41. See also "PornUtopia," in *Lingua Franca* (April/May 1997) for a survey of this phenomenon.

Lynette Felber

Posing, in *The Governess*

Capturing the Shadows of Ghosts

Mixed Media and the Female Gaze in *The Women on the Roof* and *The Governess*

The nostalgic craze for period and costume drama in films produced on the threshold of the twenty-first century presents a cultural enigma: Why compulsively look back to the nineteenth century on the brink of the twenty-first? Why not reevaluate the twentieth century in which we lived? The obvious parallel between nineteenth-century anxiety about the transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy and twentieth-century concerns about leaving the industrial economy for a technological one supplies one explanation for our current fascination with the increasingly distant past. Many turn-of-the century films, however, not only turn nostalgically to the past, but reinterpret it through a contemporary lens, purporting to recover subtexts about gender and sexual orientation that were unspeakable at the time. Two recent period films rewrite history to ask what roles women might have played in the discovery of photography and the practice of early photographers. These films self-consciously raise the contemporary issue of the female gaze as they center on protagonists who appropriate the nineteenth-century technology of photography to establish themselves as professionals.

Carl-Gustav Nykvist's *The Women on the Roof* (1990) evokes the artistic milieu of turn-of-the century studio photography, while Sandra Goldbacher's *The Governess* (1998) is set in the early days of experimental photography. As photographers, the films' female protagonists seize the subject role and preempt the authority and power of the gaze. Ironically, in each film the static medium of photography is rendered within the vehicle of film, or "moving pictures." Self-conscious meditations on gender, visual media, and representation, the films experiment with reversal of the subject position to investigate gendered subjectivity. By alternately assigning the roles of voyeur and exhibitionist to female as well as to male characters, the films challenge the voyeuristic gaze as traditional "property of the masculine spectator."[1] These films suggest that contemporary filmmakers believe that the issue of female spectatorship needs to be addressed historically (what *did* it mean?) and that the issue has an ongoing relevance. The historical settings of these films articulate the desire to situate the female gaze—and thus gender relations—in the past to understand what it meant to be a women in the nineteenth century as well as to reexamine the issue of the gaze from a less monolithic late-twentieth-century perspective.

Set in 1914 Stockholm against the historical backdrop of World War I, *The Women on the Roof* foregrounds two New Women, Linnea (Amanda Ooms) and Anna (Helena Bernstr$_{ö}$m), whose relationship begins when they inhabit adjoining rooms on the top floor of a large building, overshadowed by an enormous factory smokestack. Linnea is a photographer's menial assistant, and Anna is an artist-photographer working

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The Women on the Roof: Anna in her studio

on a series of fantasy tableaux or "camera pictures." The women become lovers and are then enmeshed in a ménage à trois when Anna's former lover, Willy (Stellan Skarsgård), returns and becomes involved with both women. The film culminates with the revelation that Anna learned her profession from a noted photographer, Halling, who "adopted" her from an orphanage only to make her the subject of his child pornography, ultimately passing as her "husband," impregnating her, and inadvertently causing her sterilization when performing an abortion on her at age sixteen. *The Women on the Roof* reaches a denouement with Willy's accidental death after he sells information about Anna's whereabouts to Halling; fearing the police will suspect them of murder, the women cover up his death by throwing his body into the factory chimney. Near the end of the film, Anna, crawling on the roof, disappears through the mist, possibly to destroy the pornographic slides or to throw herself down the chimney at the prospect of again being seized by Halling.

The Governess takes place in the 1830s; the setting is historically contextualized as the discovery of the process of fixing photographic images on paper, which is attributed to the female protagonist in the course of the film's action. Forced to leave her middle-class Jewish family in East London after the murder of her father drives the family into bankruptcy, Rosina Da Silva (Minnie Driver) adopts the identity of Mary Blackchurch and finds a position as a governess with a prosperous Scottish family living on an estate on the Isle of Skye. Her interest in the scientific photographic experiments of the master, Charles Cavendish (Tom Wilkinson), leads to a brief collaboration when, conducting a private seder in her room, she accidently discovers that salt will fix photographic images. The collaboration leads to intimate photo sessions and, ultimately, to an affair.

Voyeurism and the Gaze

Voyeurism in both films characterizes the relationships of the protagonists and functions to reveal spectatorship's ambiguous role in the gaze. Although the "voyeuristic position" is conventionally viewed as masculine[2] and sadistic, in *The Women on the Roof* the naïve Linnea serves as a voyeur within the film, a figure for the female film spectator.[3] Lodging in the room next to Anna's photographic studio, Linnea voyeuristically observes Anna's professional activity, peeking through the transom over the door between their rooms. Since what she sees is Anna shooting portraits, the film depicts a female-mediated gaze through a series of lenses: Linnea's gaze seizes Anna, whose professional gaze perceives her photographic subjects. The film contains other examples of the female gaze as Anna makes Linnea her photographic subject, first by herself and later in tableaux with Willy.

The question of whether female perception of the female image differs from the traditional male perspective has occupied film criticism for over 20 years. Teresa de Lauretis argues that "for women spectators . . . we cannot assume identification to be single or simple. For one thing, identification is itself a movement, a subject-process, a relation: the identification (of oneself) with something other (than oneself)."[4] Significantly, the female perceiver of the female image experiences identity *and* difference, discovery of self *and* Other. Unlike the dyad of male gaze/female spectacle, it produces identity (sameness) and a slighter *extent* of difference (individuality). Jackie Stacey argues that cinematic identification involves not only identity

but "negotiation of self and ideal . . . , the mediation of similarity and difference across the multiple meanings of cinematic desire and identification," and that identification may "articulate homoerotic desires."[5] The lesbian erotics of Nykvist's film create a female gaze/female spectacle which encompasses desire, identity, and difference. The depiction of a bisexual ménage à trois by a male director may lead one to ask if the film posits the female couple as an image of lesbian desire or if it is intended as an erotic image for male voyeurism, a traditional use of purportedly lesbian couples for masculine titillation in film, particularly pornography.[6] Obviously, the gender and sexual orientation of the spectator play a part in the way the scene is perceived: de Lauretis identifies the individuality of the spectator, her "psycho-sexual configuration," with a film's ability to function "as a scenario of desire . . . whether a film can engage her spectatorial desire or, literally, whether she can see herself in it."[7]

According to Stacey, the identification process may facilitate "transformation and production of new identities."[8] Thus it follows that Linnea, female-mentored, is able to profit from the knowledge she voyeuristically gained from Anna as a role model, as well as from her more conventional upbringing, to establish herself professionally at the end of the film. By way of contrast, Anna, professionally and sexually male-mentored, is irrevocably damaged by being the object of the male gaze and can only temporarily extricate herself from patriarchal control. Because Anna is mentored by her pedophilic "father," the usual risk of cross-gendered mentorship—a doubly hierarchical relationship for women—is exacerbated: the danger of being treated as "a charming little girl who cannot be taken seriously"[9] is both literal and sinister. In contrast to cross-gendered relationships, including the mentor-protégé relationship in *The Governess,* where Charles "does not like [Rosina] to use the camera," in *The Women on the Roof* Anna teaches Linnea photographic skills; Linnea and Anna photograph each other in professional studio poses. The reciprocity of this act is emphasized by the parallelism of the photographs they take: both are formal full-length studio portraits in which the woman holds a red umbrella.

In *The Women on the Roof,* Willy is also a voyeur, and the film explores women's complicity with patriarchy through the characters' bisexual/lesbian ménage à trois. Willy takes Linnea up on the roof, initiating her into his skylight vantage point for gazing, from which they observe Anna shooting portraits of a couple in a costumed scene of bondage. Willy is only an opportunistic voyeur, however, as opposed to the professional voyeur, Halling, who stages scopophilic scenes for his own photographic gaze. Willy and Linnea see Anna enacting a debased version of her dream of a professional studio in which she and Linnea would produce "portraits and calling cards," instead reinscribing the sado-masochistic themes she learned from

The Women on the Roof: A threesome with Willy, Linnea, and Anna

Halling. In this scene, then, Linnea and Willy share a bemused and condemnatory gaze; Anna, while in the subject position as photographer, becomes the female spectacle for the couple. Further, the voyeuristic couple represents the typical theater audience, where spectators are both women and men. Linnea's complicity with Willy provides a different vantage point at the same time that it blinds her to the full truth. Just as Willy earlier deflected Anna's erotic attention from Linnea, so he now distracts Linnea from understanding Anna's past. Only after Willy's death does Linnea comprehend the significance of the story of abuse that Anna compulsively narrates and reinscribes through her tableaux.

The idea that male and female spectators perceive differently is also suggested by an earlier scene where Linnea and her suitor, Holger, view a newsreel of World War I combat in a movie theater. Linnea's expression is awestruck and horrified; Holger, a soldier, is inured to the horrors of war and is intent on putting his arm around Linnea. The sequence suggests that male and female viewers of the same spectacle differ radically in their engagement, identification, and reactions to it. Although both films explore alternatives to the homogeneity of the male gaze, *The Governess* alternates between the male and the female gaze in order to explore heterosexual desire and power. *The Women on the Roof,* in contrast, explores a collaborative gaze (i.e., Linnea and Willy's) and lesbian desire. Both films, however, postulate alternatives through techniques such as professional portraiture and self-portraits. These films are preoccupied with vision and revision, with viewing through various media and lenses, challenging a static conception of the gaze by positing multiple perspectives.

Nykvist's and Goldbacher's films also draw the audience into voyeurism and develop spectator complicity through the use of nudity. At the end of *The Women on the Roof,* the relatively innocuous images of soft-focus adult nudity are replaced with the images of child pornography, implicating the viewer (i.e., society) as a voyeur in the act which ultimately destroys Anna. The viewer's voyeuristic complicity is particularly emphasized in the scene near the end of the film in which Linnea and Anna, two female spectators, view Halling's slides. One scene creates a sort of three-dimensional collage, with the real-life Anna blocking the projected images of herself as a child, while Linnea and the audience attempt to make sense of this visual juxtaposition and the revelations about her past—how her childhood experience has formed the adult Anna. Anna interrupts the projection by standing in front of the light, superimposing her body over the slide images, a rebellion against and an effort to seize control of her mentor's photographic production of her image. As the camera dwells on the shots of the young Anna in erotic poses and scenes of bondage, the film self-consciously creates a complicity between the child pornographer and the spectator. Finally, the camera zooms in for a close-up of the young Anna's face, a close-up in which her eyes stare directly at the viewer. This sequence momentarily freezes the movement of cinema to static photography, confronting the audience with an artifact which is evidence of the crime. The scene, in creating a self-reflexive moment of female spectatorship, embeds photographs (projected slides) within cinema to suggest multiple temporal spectators: Anna and Linnea are historical spectators from a past era, but the strategy also suggests a hypothetical spectator (as Linnea views Anna's past) and the contemporary viewer (the feminist spectator of the 1990s).[10]

The final scenes of *The Women on the Roof* return Linnea to the role of voyeur as, after Willy's betrayal and Anna's disappearance, she peers through the transom into the studio. The camera provides an alternative to the point of view previously used, which attributed the gaze through the transom to Linnea, and instead delays revelation of what has been seen until she turns to leave. The unattributed camera shot through the transom shows Halling with a young girl; the delay and the impartial perspective add a layer of ambiguity to the shot: it might be a flashback to the youthful Anna or it may depict a younger girl who will reenact Anna's fate. The final scene shows Linnea walking purposefully away from the building with Anna's camera and tripod to begin a new life as a photographer.

If Linnea is a figure for the female film spectator, how do we interpret her departure? Her act is one of both self-preservation and appropriation. Although Halling is again in possession of the studio, Linnea has seized the camera, the instrument of the gaze. Anna's apparent death at the end implies that the patriarchal gaze inevitably appropriated Anna as object and thus destroyed her, despite her extraordinary will to survive. Linnea, who learned photography from a same-sex mentor, free of the risk of castration which besets the male, is able to establish herself independently. The identity between Anna and Linnea permits Linnea to learn professional skills; but her degree of difference, her unique individuality, permits her to learn from Anna's self-destruction and distance herself in self-preservation.[11] Her acts of voyeurism, reversing the usual gendering of that role, function didactically: she

learns from Anna both photographic skills and lessons about surviving within patriarchy.

In *The Governess,* Rosina's voyeuristic curiosity initiates her relationship with her married employer as she spies on Charles Cavendish and steals into his laboratory to examine his specimens, his prints, and his camera, revealing *her* interest and *eliciting* his invitation to visit the laboratory. Later, her act is echoed by Cavendish's son Henry (Jonathan Rhys-Meyers), who sneaks into her room to discover her true identity as a Jewess and to fondle her clothing and caress her bed. Just as her act of voyeurism leads to her affair with the master, so the son's act leads to his seduction by Rosina. The androgynous appearance of Rhys-Meyers facilitates gender-role variations in this triangular Freudian affair: he plays the male seduced with Rosina as female seducer, a parallel to his father. His youth also facilitates his presentation as a cross-gendered double, as a masculine counterpart to the immature, sentimental Rosina, who utters romantic love-lorn platitudes like "I'd let you suck the marrow from my bones," to the distress of the more sophisticated and experienced Charles.

Mixed Media: Photographs Within Cinema

Both films are centered around a series of voyeuristic photo shoots, a technique which embeds photographs within film, mixing media and creating an effect both static and kinetic. Goldbacher juxtaposes two parallel sequences in which first Charles, then Rosina, photograph each other in erotic poses, placing the audience in the role of a voyeur (as in *The Women on the Roof*) of nudity and intimate scenes. Role reversal is significant in this diptych of scenes as the characters exchange (albeit unwillingly on Charles's part) roles of subject and Other. The film partially confirms and partially contests Laura Mulvey's now-classic observation that "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly."[12] Although this totalizing generalization has been challenged (by Mulvey herself and others),[13] in the first sequence Charles's view would seem to "determine" Rosina as his object, though much of the "fantasy" is supplied by her imagination. The second sequence reverses the binary, gendered associations, however, challenging Mulvey's generalization.

Cavendish insists upon his right (as male, as master, and as photographer) to the role of gazer, and on impersonal contexts reflected by his interest in photographing natural history, still life, and specimens. His first photograph of Rosina is impersonal, taken with his camera mounted in the window and poised on her as she stands deliberately still, publicly complicit with his gaze, outside his window. Rosina asks him if he's ever photographed "the human face," to which he responds, "It doesn't interest me, I'm afraid." Rosina finally insists that he try a portrait, "a Biblical study [of Queen Esther] in the manner of Raphael."[14] Their gendered preferences for these contrasting photographic subjects may be interpreted within the context of Nancy Chodorow's theories of gendered interactions: Charles prefers the autonomous and impersonal; Rosina prefers the personal and relational.[15]

Rosina's act of posing as Cavendish's subject in the first sequence precipitates their sexual relationship; just as she invites the portraits, she is, though younger and a woman, the initiator in their sexual affair, and it is not surprising that in one of the subsequent portraits, she asks to play the role of the seductress. In the seduction sequence, the camera vacillates between Rosina's poses and Charles's eye as it appears through the camera eyepiece, visually mimicking the gaze by oscillating between object and perceiver. In a discussion of cinematic technique, de Lauretis observes

The Governess: Rosina posing

The Governess: Rosina poses the sleeping Cavendish

that "the problem with the notion of an alternation between image and gaze is that they are not commensurable terms: the gaze is a figure, not an image. We see the image; we do not see the gaze."[16] By combining static photos with the movement of film, however, Goldbacher emulates the gaze, that admittedly intangible figure.

Rosina's desire to "pose," a manifestation of her aspiration to be a stage actress, is multifaceted and ambiguous. She is first of all a "poseur" in the Protestant Cavendish house as she creates the persona of the English-Italian Mary Blackchurch to gain employment as a governess. The film explores the ambiguous implications of such posing, an act which implies potential subversion: the poseur illicitly obtains information and experience while hiding her real identity. Through posing as Mary Blackchurch, Rosina acquires professional skills that lead to her independence and eventually to her identity as an acclaimed photographer. Since Cavendish conceives of her role in his photographic laboratory as an assistant rather than a protégée, these skills are clandestinely acquired. The consequences of her photographic poses are much more complex than her role as an imposter, however. Although Rosina is a willing poseur and poser both as Mary Blackchurch and as she serves as Cavendish's photographical subject in the first photo shoot sequence, the film explores the implications of the passive dimension of posing, as both sexes successively enact the object role. The film challenges the notion that the gaze is inherently male, illustrating de Lauretis's assertion that "The analogy that links identification-with-the-look to masculinity and identification-with-the-image to femininity breaks down precisely when we think of a spectator alternating between the two."[17]

The film establishes a visual parallel through the scene in which Rosina photographs Charles: the two sequences form a sort of gender-reversed diptych. The second sequence presents an unusual perspective in that "only in rare moments is the woman granted a comparably orchestrated look at the man as the object of desire."[18] In the climactic scene of the film, Rosina enacts her secret fetishistic desire: she undresses, caresses, and photographs Cavendish as he sleeps in his laboratory. The pose in which she places him is both erotic, a reclining male "centerfold," and vulnerable, with his arms raised above his head. In this reversal of Cavendish's photo session, Rosina's eye appears in the camera eyepiece. The reversal also presents a variation on the gendered associations of what Gertrud Koch terms "the axis of voyeurism/exhibitionism, i.e., following the direction of the voyeuristic look towards the object displayed or displaying it/herself."[19] Rosina appropriates the power of the conventionally masculine photographer-voyeur, contesting "the determining male gaze" and substituting her own.

Through the depiction of Cavenish's character and the scene in which Rosina photographs him, the film supplements and contests the traditional scenario of woman as object of desire. The two photo-shoot sequences and their aftermaths reveal that Cavendish is threatened by the possibility of losing his own subject status in his relationship with Rosina as in his role as photographer. As he resists the relationship, his phrasing, fraught with verbs suggesting Lacanian post-mirror stage fragmentation, reveals the castration fear inherent when the male is seized by the female gaze. His fear of Rosina's gaze recalls Freud's reading of the Medusa, which evokes a "terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something."[20] "Are you trying to overtake me, Miss?" he asks. He imagines "drown-[ing]" in her long black hair, and tells her, "I cannot surrender myself to things as you can." Most of all, he fears losing himself to her perception: "Your eyes are so huge," he claims, "You devour me." Significantly, he first makes love to her only after she veils her face.[21] Finally, he confesses, "I do not want the feelings that I have"; he claims that she takes his "strength" away from his work (suggesting a femme fatale and a Delilah). Cavendish seems to sense both the erotic potential of photography, "a visual caress between the viewer and the subject(s) of the picture" and its asso-

ciation with death, capturing a moment that no longer is, documenting that "all time is forever lost."[22] As Christian Metz explains, "Even when the person photographed is still living, that moment when she or he *was* has forever vanished. Strictly speaking, the person *who has been photographed*—not the total person, who is an effect of time—is dead."[23]

Although Rosina intends the portrait as a romantic gesture, Cavendish immediately ends their relationship after he finds the nude photograph of himself she leaves in the laboratory as a gift. Unwilling to accept the vulnerability of being the object of the female gaze, Charles's greatest fear is of losing his self. "I cannot be consumed," he asserts as he rejects her. Her behavior after the relationship ends confirms his fears, despite the apparently sentimental and benign note she writes to accompany the gift: "You have let me glimpse your soul. I give you mine." The sight of his own phallus in the portrait should be reassuring; Freud links the Medusa to an "apotropaic act," which reassures the spectator that he is not castrated, that he still bears the power, an act which should frighten away the enemy.[24] The person Cavendish sees as the "enemy," however, composed the photograph to satisfy her own desire. And the finished photograph of Cavendish, arranged by Rosina into the traditionally female pose of a reclining nude, represents the reversal of the "masculine voyeuristic-position. . . . [and] reproduces the subject/object dichotomy of the dominant discourse."[25]

Rosina's definition of the photographic process is also double-edged. Cavendish understands that the photograph is a fetish, which implies "loss (symbolic castration)," but he does not understand that a fetish is also "protection against loss."[26] Photography is positively associated with the recuperative value of history, memory, and the fetish. "You've made it possible to capture the essence of people, to fix memory, to fix people, lost people," Rosina tells Charles. At the same time, more negatively, the process invades the privacy of the Other and creates stasis of character by freezing the fluid self, defining it at one moment in time. The detrimental effect of the gaze, and the destructive power play in the action of gazing, is revealed as the former lovers engage in mutually hurtful behavior. Charles summons Rosina to the laboratory when Hewlett, a representative from the Royal Society whom Charles has invited, comes to visit, only for her to witness his public attribution of *her* discovery of the sodium chloride fixing agent to a "happy accident," completely denying her agency in the achievement. Similarly retaliative, Rosina seduces his young son and uses her intimate portrait as a weapon, exposing Charles's infidelity by presenting the nude portrait to his wife at the dinner table upon her departure.

A Feminist Appropriation of History

The subversiveness of the female photographers in these films rewrites history from the retrospective knowledge of the present to suggest that women's appropriation of professional roles through gaining technical knowledge is a solution to the problem of gendered subjectivity. In *The Women on the Roof,* Linnea and Anna are co-conspirators in a series of covert acts against patriarchy. Anna proposes to teach Linnea photography when she finds that Fisher, Linnea's employer, hired her to do only menial tasks, washing photographic plates. Linnea steals plates from Fisher for Anna's series of artistic tableaux. *The Governess* also uses a subversive appropriation as Rosina takes photographic equipment from Cavendish—and leaves behind a self-portrait which emphasizes her eyes (her gaze)—as she prepares to leave the estate. Returning to London, she assumes the role of photographer, professional gazer. The coda reveals that Rosina has established her reputation through specializing in portraiture of the Jewish people.

Anna and Rosina are subversive artists, visionaries interested in developing the aesthetic potential of photography, aspiring to create something more than mere mimesis, more than an image of the status quo. In *The Governess,* Rosina counters Charles's definition of photographic mimesis as a "faithful and scientific record of reality" with her own definition emphasizing creation of an alternative reality: "It's another means of expression."[27] Both Anna and Rosina use photography to create photographic sequences or narratives; transcending the stasis of "camera pictures," they want to tell stories and produce film's unfolding temporal and narrative sequence of images. The characters anticipate the cinematic technology through which their stories are told in a self-reflexive emulation.

These narratives might be used to create alternatives to patriarchal master plots. Anna is intent upon narrating the story of the fictional Segoria and King Harkan. The story she tells, however, reveals that she is trapped in her past. The exposé of Anna's true relationship with Halling provokes a reevaluation and reinterpretation of her tableau. Her photographic allegory of the maiden Sigoria, held prisoner in a tower by King Harkan, now reads as a dark fairy-tale displacement of her abuse by her adoptive father and mentor. While her insistence that Linnea pose nude and play the role of Sigoria (wearing the wig Anna previously wore in

Halling's photographs of her—the model whom she described to Linnea as a "prostitute" from Hamburg) creates a female gaze/female spectacle, it also enmeshes Linnea in a tableau of exploitation, placing her in the role Anna previously played. Is Anna's wish to tell the story a desire to break silence, to work through her trauma psychoanalytically, placing herself in the position of gazer? Her desire to present the tableau publicly, "at the orphanage, for example," suggests a didactic purpose: to create a cautionary tale for children and/or to reproach the administrators who placed her in the custody of a pedophile. Despite the mention of her previous escape from Halling in Hamburg, Anna's claustrophobic presentation throughout the film—except for two brief excursions to the roof, she is never shown outside the studio—visually delineates her entrapment. Willy's comment just before his death, "It's your own story that's over, Anna," coupled with her mysterious disappearance into the roof-top mist, suggests that her allegory was a compulsive, circular retelling—that Anna cannot write a new plot, that her gaze is fixed on the past, and is thus self-destructive. Rosina also recreates existing patriarchal narratives: she asks Cavendish to photograph her in Biblical scenarios, to cast her as Queen Esther as interpreted by Raphael. The seemingly original story of female desire she attempts to tell in photographing Cavendish nude in actuality simply reverses conventional gendering of the voyeur-exhibitionist dyad.

The Self-Portrait and Voiceover: To "See Oneself Seeing" and Hear Oneself Speak

Near the end of the film, Rosina takes a self-portrait, an autonomous act which collapses gaze and gazer into one identity. This scene should be read in relation to Rosina's previous desire for Charles to photograph her. As a woman accustomed to the cultural role of female spectacle, Rosina not only accepted but encouraged Charles's gaze. "I want to know how you see me," she claimed, inviting his series of exotic, and finally nude, portraits. Perhaps more than any other device explored in the film, the self-portrait appears to present a solution to the inegalitarian subject-object dyad, to the gendered gaze. De Lauretis, focusing on film, sees this kind of act as only theoretical, literally impossible: "To cite again an often-cited phrase, one can 'look at her looking,' but one cannot look at oneself looking."[28]

The self-portrait, presented in this film as the photograph embedded in cinema, is a technique which attempts to surmount this impossibility and to allow one to see oneself from the outside. Carol Mavor names such an attempt (adapting Merleau-Ponty's idea of the visible invisible via Lacan) the "gaze of the invisible."[29] Mavor describes this hypothetical outward visualization from within as a process which "forces us to confront our own subjectivity." Though such self-perception is "purely constructed," it works to "entertain a sensate gaze from both inside and outside of a reticulated body, which must come at the cost of shattering the *visualized* construction of the subject-object dichotomy."[30] *The Governess,* by embedding photographs within a film and by using the motion-picture camera to mimic the gaze perceiving the photographs, manages to represent the gaze itself. The combination of media, the embedding of the static art of photography within motion pictures, facilitates the self-portraiture through which Rosina looks at herself looking.

The voice-over narration used in the coda to *The Governess* establishes Rosina's subject status as she narrates the history of her professional and artistic development. Goldbacher's use of the voice-over permits direct access to Rosina's intimate point of view and her assessment of her own experience. She rejects Cavendish when he comes to her in London and offers her what she previously covertly seized: to have her make his portrait. "I'm in your hands," he offers, "Do with me what you will." Rosina takes a formal studio portrait, and claims that they are "quite done"—implicitly with both their session and their romance. De Lauretis lauds the voice-over as potentially feminist in her discussion of Yvonne Rainer's efforts to use narrative strategies in an "'explicitly feminist'" film to "represent the female protagonist not as narrative image but as the narrating voice."[31] Goldbacher's film uses both mixed media and the voice-over to represent female subjectivity.

The Women on the Roof and *The Governess* are "woman's films" in content and context, women-centered, and gendered female by their gothic genre, but they are not merely "feminine." Their subject matter and theme, foregrounding female protagonists who gain professional skills, investigating alternatives to the traditional gendering of the gaze and subjectivity, create films that are overdetermined as feminist works. Ultimately, however, both films demonstrate that subversive appropriation and reversal of the status quo are insufficient solutions for feminists within patriarchy. The films reveal the ephemeral and elusive quality of subject status through the metaphor of "fixing" images. In *The Women on the Roof* Anna speaks of photog-

The Governess: Rosina as photographer

raphy as an amorphous "catching an angel in flight," and in *The Governess* a servant girl describes it as "capturing shadows of ghosts." The embedded photographs are static moments-in-time, fetishes—covert desires—that appear briefly in the kinetic movement of cinema.

Rosina frees herself from her previous need to see herself through Cavendish's (patriarchy's) gaze. Yet her act of self-photography is ambiguous—ultimately autonomous but also narcissistic, denying the relational perspective she previously advocated. Her thrice-uttered assertion that she rarely thinks about the experience anymore creates as much doubt as certainty, and the last shot of the film zooms in on her studio portrait of Cavendish, an image of the past, of a "fixed memory" of "lost people." The photograph is obviously part of Rosina's formative past, but it is also an image of loss. By specializing in portraiture, she has created a "feminine" variant on her male mentor's impersonal perspective, yet she has not found a way to combine the professional status she appropriated from him with a loving relationship. At the same time, her self-portraiture may be viewed, not pejoratively, as narcissism, but as an essential self-knowledge prerequisite to an egalitarian relationship. Stacey argues that "narcissism can also be seen as a type of object choice itself" and need not "be dismissed as a mere form of reflective self-appreciation."[32]

The films' alternations between the female and male gaze and their explorations of female subjectivity pose the question: What difference does the gendering of the gaze create? Though Nykvist and Goldbacher, a male and a female director, both terminate their films with affirmational images of women photographers, both endings also treat the female gaze ambivalently.[33] Koch asks if "films by women actually succeed in subverting this basic model of the camera's construction of the gaze, whether the female look through the camera at the world, at men, women and objects will be an essentially different one."[34] These films, set in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, created for audiences of the 1990s, present the historical difficulty of sustaining women's subjectivity for contemporary spectators, juxtaposing major feminist issues in two eras, interrogating a single or monolithic perspective of the past by rewriting and revisioning the gaze and the gender relations it embodies.

Doane argues that "it can never be enough simply to reverse sexual roles or to produce empowered images of the woman" because of the "deeply ingrained" sexism of "specifying the gaze in relation to sexual difference."[35] Both films experiment with the female gaze to ask: What more than simple reversal can be achieved? The "premise of the woman's film," as Doane defines it, includes a female gaze which "abolishes the distance conducive to voyeurism."[36] The reciprocal female photography of *The Women on the Roof* and the self-portrait of *The Governess* are self-conscious efforts to reduce this distance. As cultural productions, these two films are suggestive. The proximity created by the female gaze/female spectacle produces an object lesson for the female spectator, and the films accomplish at least one feminist objective, "to conquer the territory that has been reserved to men"[37] through appropriation of professional skills.[38] Yet the films present as unresolvable the problem of the gendered gaze; neither film is hopeful about the potential for equality within the male/female dyad or its capacity to overcome subject/object hierarchy.[39] Each protagonist dreams of a collaborative studio (Linnea with Anna, Rosina with Charles), only to find herself autonomous but alone at the end. Subjectivity and autonomy are achieved at a cost of the relational perspective often defined as feminine. The embedding of photography within a motion picture creates both a visual juxtaposition and a historical anachronism: the media exist concurrently today, but one predates the other chronologically. The nineteenth-century problem of women's need for professional employment is resolved through the acquisition of photographic skills within the contemporary medium of film, but the embedding of one medium within the other suggests a

The Women on the Roof: fantasy tableau with Linnea as Segoria

historical and ideological disjunction. Moreover, as Metz observes "film lets us believe in more things [more possibilities, opportunities], photography lets us believe more in one thing" (88). The historical problem that is solved by photography is juxtaposed with the even more complex and unresolved problem of inegalitarian gendered relationships within patriarchal society depicted in these films. At a given point in time, one may only briefly glimpse, but not "fix," the solution to ideological problems: they appear elusively as the "shadows of ghosts."

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Notes

I would like to thank director Sandra Goldbacher for her careful reading of this essay and Professor Steve Carr at Indiana-Purdue University, Fort Wayne, for his technical assistance with the photographs.

1. Mary Ann Doane, *Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 12.
2. Gertrud Koch, "Ex-Changing the Gaze: Re-Visioning Feminist Film Theory," *New German Critique* 34 (1985), 142.
3. My approach to the female spectator is grounded in theoretical rather than empirical reception theory. Unlike Mary Ann Doane, who argues that she has "never thought of the female spectator as synonymous with the woman sitting in front of the screen, munching her popcorn" ("Untitled," *Camera Obscura* [1989], 142), I conceive of the female spectator as the woman we could imagine—theoretically, hypothetically—watching the film, a contemporary woman who would identify with actresses and characters on the screen and compare their actions and destinies to her own. The question of the female spectator and the gaze has been a major issue in film theory since the publication of Laura Mulvey's classic essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Screen* 16.3 (1975), 6-18. The movement in subsequent criticism, by Mulvey and others, has been to posit a less monolithic subject and consider the possibility of a female gaze. See also Mulvey's "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by *Duel in the Sun,*" *Framework* 15,16,17 (1981), 12-15, as well as the special issue of *Camera Obscura* devoted to this subject, ed. Janet Bergstrom and Mary Ann Doane (20.1 [1989]), especially Mulvey's "British Feminist Film Theory's Female Spectator," 68-81. See also Gaylyn Studlar, *In The Realm of Pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich and the Masochistic Aesthetic* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988); and Linda Williams, "'Something Else Besides a Mother': *Stella Dallas* and the Maternal Melodrama," *Cinema Journal* 24.1 (1984), 2-27.
4. Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 141.
5. Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 175; 174.
6. See Linda Williams regarding the lesbian number as a warm-up for the heterosexual sex act in pornography, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 140. The three major characters in *The Women on the Roof* form a Freudian Oedipal triangle exploring gender identification: the original couple (mother-daughter), Anna and Linnea, is broken apart by the arrival of Willy (the father). Upon his arrival, he appropriates the mother's desire (the older and more sophisticated Anna) and leaves the daughter separate, solitary, and desirous. The film scripts a Freudian scenario, however, to critique and rewrite this

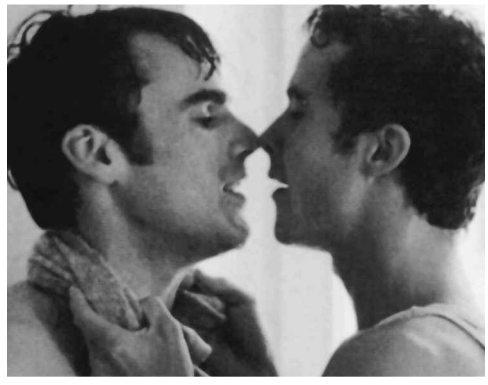
plot. Although Willy seduces Linnea, ostensibly emulating Freud's re-routing of adolescent to "mature" female desire (the desire for a man and an infant), turning her lesbian desire to a phallocentric direction, the process in the film is only temporary. With the return of Halling, the real "father" and representative of patriarchy, the ménage is destroyed. To my mind, the film deliberately eschews the conventions of masculine voyeurism in its treatment of Linnea and Anna's relationship: the women are never shown nude together and their erotic consummation is only suggested, rather than displayed for male titillation. Although his function in the ménage is heterosexual, Willy is also a trickster figure: Anna calls him "a free spirit," and his betrayal of Anna was attempted to extract money from Halling to purchase three passages to America. The trickster typically challenges the status quo and is "of indeterminate sex and changeable gender." See Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Knopf, 1985), 291. Moreover, although Willy at first seems to divert the lesbian erotics to heterosexual practice, his death and the women's subsequent collaboration establishes their relationship as primary.

7. Teresa de Lauretis, "On the Subject of Fantasy," in *Feminisms in the Cinema,* ed. Laura Pietropaolo and Ada Testaferri (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 64.
8. Stacey, 172.
9. Daniel Levinson, *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 98.
10. My reading is grounded in Miriam Hansen's paraphrase of E. Ann Kaplan's distinction between "the historical spectator, the hypothetical spectator constructed through the film's strategies, and the contemporary female spectator with a feminist consciousness"; see "Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification: Valentino and Female Spectatorship," *Cinema Journal* 25.4 (1986), 9.
11. Although Linnea's antecedents remain hazy compared to the fairly explicit exposition supplied by the slides documenting Anna's abusive childhood, early scenes show Linnea brought to the city and socializing on the weekend with a slightly older woman, perhaps an aunt or family friend. Moreover, her naïveté at the film's opening signals her relative "normalcy" in relation to the sophisticated and bohemian, but damaged, Anna.
12. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 11.
13. In addition to those works listed in note 1, other reconsiderations include D. N. Rodowick, "The Difficulty of Difference," *Wide Angle* 5.1 (1982), 4-15, and Hansen's "Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification."
14. The parallel between Esther and Rosina as Jewesses chosen by a powerful male without knowledge of their true heritage is perhaps the most obvious resemblance.
15. Nancy Chodorow rewrites the Freudian Oedipal configuration to emphasize the mother-daughter bond. In contrast to the close proximity of the mother-daughter identification, the son's identity is formed through the distance and separation from the mother. Thus, the girl's model for social relationships is formed to privilege closeness and identity, the son's for distance and difference. See *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978). Other major theorists focusing on the psychoanalytic implications of the mother-daughter relationship are Dorothy Dinnerstein, Jean Baker Miller, and Deborah Tannen.
16. de Lauretis, *Alice*, 142.
17. Ibid., 142-43.
18. Koch, 142.
19. Ibid., 144.
20. Sigmund Freud, "Medusa's Head," *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* trans. and ed. James Strachey (1940: London: Hogarth, 1955), 18: 273.
21. The veil aptly signals Cavendish's ambivalence. Mary Ann Doane's detailed analysis of the veil emphasizes how it "incarnates contradictory desires—the desire to bring [a woman] closer and the desire to distance her," *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 54.
22. Carol Mavor, *Pleasure Taken: Performances of Sexuality and Loss in Victorian Photographs* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 28, 35. For an excellent discussion of the association of death and the photograph, see chapters 1 and 2.
23. Christian Metz, "Photography and Fetish," *October* 34 (1985), 84.
24. Freud, 274.
25. Koch, 142-43.
26. Metz, 84.
27. For a historic account of this nineteenth-century debate about the scientific versus the aesthetic nature and purpose of photography, see Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), 13-36.
28. de Lauretis, *Alice*, 142.
29. Mavor, 82.
30. Ibid., 82-83.
31. de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 122.
32. Stacey, 174-75.
33. It should be noted that both directors are also the authors of their screenplays, Nykvist in collaboration with Lasse Summanen.
34. Koch, 144.
35. Doane, *Desire to Desire*, 176-77.
36. Ibid., 177.
37. Jessica Benjamin, "A Desire of One's Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space," in *Feminist Studies, Critical Studies,* ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 78.
38. The other "tasks" Benjamin defines are "to redeem what has been devalued in women's domain" and "to resolve and transcend the opposition between these spheres [the devalued woman's and valued men's] by reformulating the relationship between them" (78).
39. Ironically, the female dyad plays a larger role as an alternative and implicit solution in the male-directed film, although *The Governess* briefly posits a female-female dyad through portraying the close friendship of the sisters, Rosina and Becca, both early in the film and as Becca becomes Rosina's assistant in her studio at the end.

Review

Chill Out

Director/writer: Andreas Struck. Producer: Jost Hering. Cinematographer: Andreas Doub. Editor: Philipp Stahl. Music: Erlandas. Fortissimo Film Sales.



Johann and Max's first kiss

The 1994 German release of Sönke Wortmann's *Maybe . . . Maybe Not (Der bewegte Mann),* a film that broke box-office records at home and went on to critical and popular acclaim internationally, sparked a new round of claims for the emergence of a German national cinema and for the return of a progressive engagement with sex, gender, and sexuality to the public arena. Yet *Maybe . . . Maybe Not*'s evocations of *past* sexual revolutions in German society (Weimar and post-68) ultimately serve as mere backdrop for a romping male-male-female love-triangle farce that, in the end, reasserts heterosexual norms and could play out just as easily in London or New York as it does in Wortmann's location: Cologne.

Chill Out is also a male-male-female love-triangle story, but here the narrative involves searching—at least by two members of the triangle, Anna and Johann—for lives and relationships *outside* the arenas of dominant cultural and sexual ideologies. The directorial debut of young German director Andreas Struck, *Chill Out* premiered at the Berlinale in 2000—a year of quadruple portent for Germany as it not only marked the 50th anniversary of the nation's renowned film festival and the first year that events were held at the newly opened Potsdamer Platz, but also saw the 10th anniversary of the reunification of Germany and the arrival of a new millennium.

The setting of the film, which proves integral to the characters' search, is contemporary Berlin, a city seeking its own distinct, post-reunification identity amidst the powerful, homogenizing currents of global capitalism. Though globally accessible in its own right (the film's title, for example, is not translated: the English words "Chill Out" *are* the title), Struck's work contains a secondary layer of meaning specific to German reception and identification—Berlin is presented as a city of polysemic sexual and gendered possibility in the spirit of a new *neosexual revolution*.

To cite a single German film as evidence of emergent national, cinematic, and sexual movements would surely smack of essentialism. But an analysis of *Chill Out*'s unique sex/gender/sexuality scenario proves valuable when viewed as a starting point for larger possibilities. In his article "The Neosexual Revolution,"[1] Volkmar Sigusch underscores that binarisms and essentializations of sexuality and gender can only end in cultural standstill. The aim of his described *neosexual revolution,* therefore, is to destabilize traditional links between sexual orientation, gender role, and gender identity, defusing the power of "either-or" labeling tropes. The uniqueness of the love triangle in *Chill Out*—marked in its inapplicability to society at large—speaks to the open potential for other arrangements of sex, sexuality, and gender variables beyond those of current dominance.

The film's plot and circumstances are difficult to synopsize—it exudes ambiguity on every level, from genre classification to narrative structure. Comedic, melodramatic, and avant-garde elements are merged into a kind of character study. And while *Chill Out* displays a slick visual polish, a kinetic pace, and a marketable techno soundtrack, the narrative lacks causality in the traditional sense: suspense and plot advancement come not from any stated end-goal of its characters, but rather from their unpredictability and defiance of traditional sex, gender, and familial roles.

Two of the characters in *Chill Out*'s erotic triangle—the seemingly "heterosexual female," Anna, and the "gay male," Johann—split the traditionally singular role of protagonist. A third character, Max, whose sexuality remains ambiguous, serves as a means for the platonic yet powerful relationship between Anna and Johann to evolve to its final form. Anna is also at least ten years older than her 20-something male counterparts, adding one more taboo to the ensuing love-triangle permutations. The trio described here comes close to Marjorie Garber's articulation of the Oedipal triangle, with Max as "the child caught in the middle,"[2] but what Max is caught between is not so much Freudian "love for mother, rivalry with the father"[3] but the equally powerful and consummated desires for both mother *and* father figures. Max is the only character who ever speaks of, or tries to enact, traditional rela-

Film Quarterly, Vol. no. 54, Issue no. 4, pages 38-41. ISSN: 0015-1386.© 2001 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Send requests for permission to reprint to: Rights and Permissions, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223.

tionship roles; in a sense, he refuses to "chill out." With Anna's rejection of her relationship with Max as anything beyond sexual, Max turns to Johann, initiating sex with him. When Max's question to Johann, "What do you want from me?" is answered with an equally unsatisfying "Nothing," he takes off, leaving Anna and Johann with a love and a definition of "family" constructed on their own terms.

The ability of German audiences to read *Chill Out* from a distinctly national perspective comes largely through the film's fourth major character—the country's reunified capital, Berlin. The film plays out in the volatile, ever-evolving Mitte and adjoining Prenzlauerberg districts of former East Berlin—where East Germany meets West, and history and modernity clash and merge on every corner. The area was home, in part, to Berlin's immigrant Eastern Jews in the 1920s and became the site of a Gestapo collection point during the war. The old, ornate apartment buildings of the region were left largely unscathed by WWII bombings, but fell into great disrepair during the postwar East/West separation, becoming home to a population of prostitutes, transvestites, and poor elderly. Since reunification, the area has become the site of Europe's fastest-growing art scene, the itinerant residents increasingly pushed out by galleries, exhibition halls, theaters, nightclubs, and apartment space established and renovated with the aid of government subsidies. The particularities of this setting are never discussed outright by *Chill Out*'s characters and would most likely be missed by international audiences. Yet for Germans, this location and the characters' neosexual interactions within it carry significant national meaning and arguably allegorical readings.

Anna is one of the 30-something West-Berliners who moved east to the Mitte/Prenzlauerberg district after reunification, inhabiting and refurbishing the abandoned prewar apartments in a movement to save these decaying historical structures from collapse.

Max and Anna on the balcony

Max on night shift

Johann claims the abandoned apartment next door to Anna's, the two spaces (transient squatter's and rooted renovator's) connected by a shared balcony. The image of this balcony and the two contrasting, but linked, spaces is the first image after the opening credits and is revisited throughout the film as a visual metaphor readable on multiple levels—emblematic of the tensions ensuing from the Mitte district's social and economic gentrification; connotative of a once-divided Germany; and globally relevant in terms of the struggle between national and transnational identification.

Echoing real-life attempts by Mitte's city housing agency to seek out families of former property owners in an attempt to make right on Nazi and Cold War confiscations, Anna's work as a government employee entails searching the city archives to fill the gaps in family trees and close outstanding wills and claims. She is a loner, with no family history or backstory, first introduced as she is accidentally locked in the city archives by Max, the young night-shift guard. Literally trapped in history, Anna climbs out a window and down a drainpipe, escaping the past and meeting a baffled Max in the courtyard below. The two look at one another in a balanced two-shot, interrupted by a momentary jump cut of the pair having sex against the courtyard wall, returning to the two-shot again for a moment, before the actual sexual encounter plays out.

This jump-cutting technique is utilized throughout the film and underscores its sexual ambiguity. Here, the flash forward reads as recognition of attraction and desire for sex, but played off a two-shot, it is impossible to determine in which character's mind we are meant to be. A later scene in the film—Anna rides her bike down to the corner gas station and winds up having another spontaneous sexual foray with the male attendant—suggests that we associate the flash forwards with her. Anna's character thus effectively reverses the traditional gender roles of pursuer/pursued; she engages in spontaneous, consensual sexual situations of her own making, without subsequent remorse or censure.

The play with gender/sexuality roles is further convoluted in that Johann is a male prostitute. The use of the prostitute figure as a metaphor finds cinematic precedent in New German Cinema with Fassbinder's Maria Braun, for example, personifying the desperate state of postwar Germany and the tensions of rising capitalism. Yet Struck's reversal of the usual depictions of "anonymous sex" and "prostitution" (activities customarily assigned to gay men and to women, respectively) destabilizes the traditional tropes. Anna dissociates sexual gratification from the pursuit of long-term, structured relationships; Johann similarly separates sexual pleasure from his work. He picks up and services businessmen, stealing their credit cards to supply himself with upscale attire, notably a formidable collection of shoes. While he proclaims himself gay and clearly states he enjoys sex with men, the capitalist realities of his profession keep him on the run (he never remains more than four weeks in the same location).

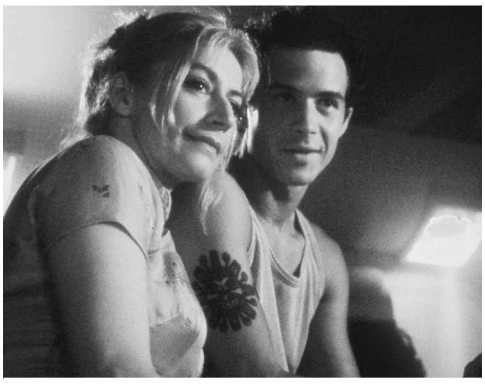
Johann's prostitution holds further allegorical significance. He is presented as a character constantly on the move, with a single photograph of his mother taped to the apartment wall and vague mentions of a father who deserted him early in his childhood. Recalling his first trick, Johann tells Anna, "And then I saw the fat wallet in his jacket. It was easy. With his credit card, I paid for my first flight to L.A." Later, standing on the apartment rooftop with Simon, a non-paying sexual partner, Johann stares out over a Berlin dotted with countless cranes and construction sites, but he does not see the city. Turning in a circle, finger pointed out at the horizon, his sights are clearly set beyond Berlin, and even Germany, as he recites, "Toronto . . . London . . . Petersburg . . . Rome . . . Caracas . . ." Paired with the fact that Johann's johns are exclusively white-collar types, it seems that Fassbinder's link between prostitution and the German economy has been updated here into a commentary on the quandary of choosing between nation-state and multinational capitalistic structures as a point of central identification.

Johann fleeing one of his johns

Johann sewing

In *Chill Out,* external appearances do not provide enough information for any conclusions about a character's gender identification or sexual orientation. When Johann is not hustling, he designs clothing. A scene midway through the film begins with him standing before a mirror. No mirror is actually seen; Johann looks out at us through an imaginary fourth wall, and *we* become his mirror (via identification with his character throughout the film, *he* also becomes ours). He shimmies a sundress down over his head, stuffs the chest with a pair of socks, and stands staring at himself critically for a moment. A quick cut to an extreme close-up of the sewing-machine head, the pattern of the dress fabric immediately identifiable as it slides across the baseplate, and suddenly Johann stands in men's clothing, watching with satisfaction as Anna, wearing her gift, turns away from the mirror and hugs him. Techno score plays, and with another cut, the music becomes diegetic; we are in a dance club, watching Anna amidst the crowd, dancing with a longhaired Rastafarian. Then, with a tug, the wig comes off and we realize that her partner is, in fact, Johann. Through the course of the film, each member of our triangle tries on the wig. Seen outside in daylight, it is auburn, not black; kinked, not dredlocked. Are these donnings performances of gender? Of race? A reflection of techno-reggae dancehall fusion? Customary signifiers slip and slide, the characters refusing to be determined solely by external signs.

The dance club in question, tellingly named "21st Century" (a DJ spins live techno beats as the attendants spin in and out of unrestricted partner permutations), figures as a repeated rendezvous point for Anna, Johann, and Max. Techno represents a German export that has become hybridized and blended with a wide range of cultural rhythms and world music traditions since the days of its origins in the 80s (most notably in the sounds of the internationally acclaimed group Kraftwerk). One could argue that the club becomes a transnational space within which the film stages its neosexual revolution. Yet as German viewers watch



Anna and Max in "21st Century"

the characters dancing, they do so with the added resonance that Berlin's actual, transnational economic center at the Potsdamer Platz is just outside the club's doors.

The central conflict of *Chill Out*—whether Johann will keep moving or settle down and make a home with Anna in Berlin—reaches its peak with the pair standing outside "21st Century." Johann tells Anna he's moving on. She tells him:

> I wonder what difference it makes, whether you go through a time like this or not. . . . The Arabs don't consider time to be a measurable flow, not chronological like the course of a river. For them, time is like the tides of the ocean. Their language knows no future tense, only present.

Johann leaves Berlin. Returns again. The two define a family of their own design. Though they sleep in the same bed, it is left ambiguous whether there is a sexual component to their relationship. There is no sense that Johann has "converted," no conjecture on how long this present living situation will continue, or even any indication as to whether or not he has quit prostitution.

A white screen. Suddenly, a crash, and a sledge hammer smashes through the wall, revealing our neosexual pair standing in one apartment, staring through the hole into the other. The two spaces are literally united. This final gesture plays effectively on the level of dramatic resolution, but brims with additional connotations. Is this crumbling wall a statement on reunified Germany and its future—political, economic, sexual—a future which, like the Arabic language tense, can only be approximated in the present? Does it speak to the possibility of simultaneously balancing national and transnational identities? To a dismantling of traditional gender and sexuality binaries?

Such inquiries may be posed and deciphered on a distinctly national level by German audiences, but they also have the potential of resonating *across* borders, in light of contemporary globalization. Yet if we are to view *Chill Out*'s challenges to dominant notions of sex, gender, and sexuality not simply in terms of political/economic allegory, but as direct critique of established social binaries, a larger question then arises: Is the neosexual revolution ahead of its time?

To date, this query remains largely un-posed to audiences, as distributors have seen fit to answer it *for* them. *Chill Out* only recently received a limited domestic release, exclusively in Berlin, and despite screenings at multiple festivals, international distribution is still on hold, with the exception of a contract with Australian television. While "gay and lesbian" films have certainly proved themselves to be viable transnational commodities, Struck's own stance on the sexual politics of his debut ("I don't consider *Chill Out* a gay film at all")[4] speaks to his film's refusal to be contained and packaged within this "alternative market," or within any existing market, for that matter—national or international, mainstream or alternative. Though the film's present inaccessibility can certainly be construed as a setback, it may also be viewed as an important *early* victory for the neosexual revolution—offering profound testament to *Chill Out*'s uniqueness and to the destabilizing power of neosexuality.

Broderick Fox received his Production M.F.A. from the University of Southern California's School of Cinema-Television and is currently at work on a Ph.D. in Critical Studies.

Notes

1. Volkmar Sigusch, "The Neosexual Revolution," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 27, no. 4 (1998): 331-60.
2. Marjorie Garber, *Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (New York: Routledge Press, 1995), 425.
3. Ibid.
4. Struck's response to my query, "Do you consider *Chill Out* to be a gay film?" February 2001.

The neosexual couple

Annual *Film Quarterly* Film Book Survey

PART I

The Analysis of Film

By Raymond Bellour. Ed. Constance Penley. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000. $49.95.

This long-overdue volume includes revised translations of arguably some of the most influential articles on film published in the 1970s. Raymond Bellour's writings on Hitchcock's *The Birds, North by Northwest, Marnie*, and *Psycho,* for years available only as increasingly illegible Xerox copies, have been re-edited and finally united in a single book. Also included are his analyses of sequences from *The Big Sleep, Gigi*, and *The Lonedale Operator*. Looking back and assessing the impact of this work 20 years later is a difficult task, one that Constance Penley, editor of the book, undertakes in her introduction with dedication, verve, and intelligence. Working before video made films accessible to the viewer on a routine basis, Bellour was among the first scholars to stress editing strategies as crucial to the way in which film creates meaning for the viewer.

Bellour emphasizes the analysis of individual sequences as a means of setting forth his general principles about the nature of film, more specifically Hollywood film. This attention to the concrete expression of what we tend to designate as the formal attributes of a given image, as well as to the relationships created between these images by these same attributes, sets Bellour's work apart from that of his contemporaries. The longevity of this work, its continued usefulness to scholars interested in aesthetics and the formal analysis of the image, is a result of Bellour's grasp of Hollywood film's specificity as an object—or rather, a set of differentiated objects—and as a medium.

A second set of issues that Bellour raised and continues to raise for the Anglo-American scholar revolves around the relationship between psychoanalysis and cinema as historically defined social institutions. Again, Bellour's contribution to this area of inquiry, which cuts across the disciplines of literature, art history, film studies, gender studies, history, etc., is the manner in which he stresses the concrete detail of a given film as the expression of these issues. For example, in his analysis of *Psycho*, he describes how what he calls "a classical alternation," the conventional series of "shot/reverse-shot" used to render dialogue, conveys the lead character's identification with his collection of stuffed birds. "In the various ways in which Norman is framed, he is associated with the outstretched beaks and widespread wings of one or several of the stuffed birds" (246). Bellour also demonstrates how it would be a mistake to set up an analysis in which "bird" routinely comes to signify "Norman." Through the same device, the film's heroine is also associated with the birds, but this association has a different order. Marion is "angel-woman-bird"; Norman is "bird-fetish-murderer." It is precisely the order of these associations that defines Marion as victim and Norman as murderer.

The precision of this analysis, as well as the form, highlights the pervasive, if largely implicit, influence of Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*. The problems of representability (*Darstellbarkeit, figurabilité)* discussed by Freud in his work on dreams are the defining terms of Bellour's analysis. Bellour's approach assumes that "film-thoughts" undergo processes analogous to those imposed on "dream-thoughts" by "the dream-work" (*Traumarbeit*). This process of selection and transformation (the dream-work) is necessary for "thought" to be expressed through images. Analysis then has as its goal to undo this initial process. (This perspective and ensuing methodology owes as much to critic/artist Thierry Kuntzel as to the better-known film theorist Christian Metz. The collected works of Kuntzel are unfortunately not available in French or English.)

The form of analysis that Bellour borrows from Freud, which underlines how the latent meanings of the film are expressed in visual terms presented chronologically, does not lead to a definitive interpretation of a given work, a problem that Freud encounters repeatedly in his analysis of patients and their dreams. Bellour's work illustrates that a film's meaning depends on a fluid dynamic system, rather than a defined static structure. His analysis moves the critic toward

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a theory of interpretation in which contingency must play a critical role, a theory according to which there can be no ultimate interpretation of a given film.

This concept is prescient for the development of film theory. It is most clearly expressed in the first chapter of the book, "The Unattainable Text," in which Bellour describes the capacity of film to construct what we might call colloquially "a never-ending story," the meaning of which is never fully elucidated. If Bellour's treatment of film and psychoanalysis has proven influential in feminist film analysis, this notion of a text endlessly reinterpreted paved the way for what we now think of as spectator studies. In particular, Bellour's work opened the field to studies that depend upon historically and regionally defined interpretations that are meaningful not because they are "true," but because they are representative of the contingencies that define interpretive strategies.

This chapter was originally published in 1975, in the middle of the period during which these collected essays were written (1969-1980); it is indicative of the way in which Bellour's larger project is caught between structuralism and post-structuralism. The initial excitement that this work generated depended at least in part upon this ambiguity. (A colleague recently mentioned that in the 1970s he waited for the next Bellour article with the same anticipation that greeted the new season's opening episode of "Dallas" in the 1980s.) These analyses were extremely precise and detailed, and yet also "open" because they did not offer a definitive reading of a film. As a consequence, they generated discussion and debate across the field at a utopian moment in which the study of cinema history and theory were not as yet considered incompatible.

Bellour's own background as a scholar is wildly heterogeneous, and is meticulously described in Penley's introduction. His research topics range from the work of the nineteenth-century novelist Charlotte Brontë to that of the contemporary avant-garde video artist Bill Viola. Bellour has a curiosity that lingers over the odd yet ultimately revelatory detail. His style is marked by a poetic imagination that exhausts itself in aesthetic analysis and that is not always easily translated into the more rigid constructions favored by Anglo-American writers.

A pioneer, he trod lightly over the terrain that he surveyed, marking it as fertile ground for the generation of scholars that followed him. This is a book of historical value that still remains a rich source of ideas and information for the emerging scholar. The publication of this volume in the same year that celebrated the 100th anniversary of the publication of Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* seems appropriate; it speaks to the way in which the problem of meaning and interpretation occupies a central position in twentieth-century thought. In the area of cinema studies, Raymond Bellour's work on film analysis constitutes a significant contribution to that project.

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Artists in the Audience

Cults, Camp and American Film Criticism

By Greg Taylor. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999. $49.50 cloth; $29.95 paper.

The "Best Films" of 1951, according to Manny Farber—and the quotation marks are his—were *Little Big Horn, Fixed Bayonets, The Thing, The Prowler, The People Against O'Hara, The Day the Earth Stood Still, The Man Who Cheated Himself,* and *Background to Danger*. So much for Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train,* Huston's *The African Queen,* Ray's *On Dangerous Ground,* or Wilder's *Ace in the Hole*—not to mention Capra's *Here Comes the Groom,* Mankiewicz's *People Will Talk*, Preminger's *The Thirteenth Letter*, King Vidor's *Lightning Strikes Twice* or Fred Zinneman's *Terese*. Sam Fuller and Howard Hawks, everyone's favorite tough-guy auteurs, are duly represented on Farber's list, but still, one cannot escape the impression that Farber's picks are, well, *idiosyncratic*. Yet the dyspeptic quirks are too bluff and four-square to seem eccentric, or even particularly willed. In Farber's relentlessly off-handed potshots, both Huston and Mankiewicz get it coming and going, and there's an earnest intensity underlying the hard-boiled aesthetics—even if one gets the feeling that the whole exercise is mounted as a mockery of conventional taste. Those quotation marks had to count for *some*thing.

If Greg Taylor's *Artists in the Audience* performed no other service than to restore interest in Farber and his fellow-camper Parker Tyler as important figures in film criticism, it would remain a valuable project. But in fact the book does more. It bids to return our attention to film criticism itself as an institution—the *only* one, it sometimes seems, to which current film study has failed to direct its penetrating gaze—an institution with a fraught context and a vexed history. After sketching the clash of jerry-built American modernism with emerging middlebrow taste, Taylor examines the work of Farber and Tyler in the 1940s as representative of, respectively, "cult" and "camp" positions of "vanguard" criticism. He goes on to investigate the mainstreaming of cult and camp taste, transmitted in particular through the work of Andrew Sarris; the subsequent retrenchments of Farber and Tyler in the face of countercultural assimilation of the oppositional energies they promoted; and the ultimate "retreat into theory" of film criticism, especially embodied in the work of Annette Michelson and in academic film study during the 1970s. Along the way, Taylor presents a wealth of useful research, especially in his lucid expositions of the contributions to cinematic tastemaking of such avowedly avant-garde journals as *View, Artforum*, and *October*, such irresistibly middlebrow periodicals as *The New Republic* and *The Nation*, and such split-the-difference curiosities as *Film Culture* in its early days.

If Taylor's treatment of the work of Farber and Tyler is somewhat limited by his attribution of self-interest or self-promotion as that work's primary motivation, it is better able thereby to deal with the "grandstanding" rhetoric, as Taylor sees it, of their writing: "As with Farber, Tyler's approach

was fueled by the vanguard desire to lead but not be followed: this may have been an example of creative, resistant spectatorship, but ultimately it was one whose purity, in practice, could be maintained only by an elite" (58). In Taylor's view, the distinctive aesthetic positions of these two critics arise as flamboyantly self-empowering gestures of defense against a new philistinism that threatens cultural boundaries. As he states in the conclusion, "Cultism and camp are fundamentally aesthetic procedures steeped in highbrow taste, and directed toward the assertion of highbrow distinction" (154). Though cult and camp are allied in their definitive double-focusing, multiplying textual levels to enable the vanguard revisionism that will remake a tawdry B-movie as a primitivist torpedo, or a slick melodrama as a mythopoetic vessel, these critical strategies remain committed, according to Taylor, to key aspects of the traditional cultural hierarchies they appear to compromise. He notes the suitability of Tyler's aesthetic to the critic's "desire to support, and explore, interesting work" (57), and this point lays the groundwork for Taylor's claim that Tyler's later work, after his first two books, marks a dramatic turn from camp appreciation to the stricter discernment of traditional standards. Less convinced of a level of fundamental seriousness beneath the cultist's ardor of Farber's work, Tyler is less inclined, in the end, to cut Farber much slack: Farber's "integration of artist and critic functions has allowed him to create within aesthetic norms but also within a vacuum of judgment, while using cinema (or any mass cultural product) in order to reassert his own artistic autonomy as an end in itself" (154).

"Undertheorized" is a word one is starting to hear these days at professional conferences in the humanities, and one might not be especially surprised, in that heady milieu, to hear the word applied to Taylor's book. The clarity of presentation here at times seems bought at the expense of complexity, and the lucidity of the writing sometimes suggests journalese (a film is said not to be Tyler's "cup of java"; elsewhere, the critic is said to be "miffed" about something or other). Like many recent works in academic film study, this book eschews High Theory in favor of a putatively more "public" mode of address. It would be a pity if theoretical advances of the past decades were put aside in the wake of this general trend, but this eschewal has particular implications for Taylor's study. Though Taylor cites theoretical work on the sociology of culture, in particular that of Pierre Bourdieu, he continues to conceptualize culture as a relatively closed field, relatively impervious to determinations of class, gender, or race. Thus, he treats the concepts of "highbrow" and "middlebrow" primarily as cultural categories, without significant implication in the terms of contemporary "identity-politics," historicism, or class issues. This enables, in turn, a model of twentieth-century taste as split between an "Arnoldean" defense of traditional value and "Wildean" assertions (after "The Critic as Artist" [1891]) of the critical empowerment of campy pleasure-seeking. It is the rise of consumerism as such, in Taylor's view—and not, to name one alternative possibility, the claim for cultural recognition of previously excluded identities—that brings about cult and camp as vanguard positions aimed against forms of commodification. To call Parker Tyler's late style "Arnoldean" is a terrible stretch on the face of it; the fact that Taylor does so emphatically points up some of the limitations of his approach.

In its treatment of the critic's aesthetic as a reflection of shifting cultural terms in postwar America and, especially, as a product of the general energies in the art world of the time, Taylor's work on Farber is excellent. But Taylor's representation of Farber as a pioneer of vanguard criticism slights the particular contexts of film criticism. Taylor cites Robert Sherwood, Meyer Levin, and especially Otis Ferguson as precursors to Farber's work of the 1940s (though he does not mention such an important figure as Harry Alan Potamkin), but he gives little sense of what was happening more generally in film criticism at the time Farber was writing. He mentions James Agee and Robert Warshow, but says nothing of others—Barbara Deming, say, and Paul Goodman and Vernon Young—whose work might have usefully counterpointed Farber's. A fuller sense of these contexts would have shown that Farber was not alone in opposing middlebrow taste by celebrating marginal films or seemingly peripheral, occulted aspects of films. Indeed, Deming, Goodman, and Young—not to mention Warshow and Agee—all practiced styles of criticism that could easily be deemed "cult" writing by Taylor's definition. But in the context of Taylor's work, Farber needs to be seen as a lone pathfinder in order to be construed as a pervasive influence on later criticism.

Perhaps for the same reason, Taylor overstates Farber's modernist-formalism. He rightly draws attention to Farber's penchant for fastening on the nonnarrative elements of Hollywood films, such as actors' physiognomies, random details of composition, or visual textures. Though Taylor presents an intricate analysis of Farber's basic quasi-Bazinian "realism," he has little to say about Farber's attitude towards the role of *content* in film. Taylor suggests that Farber's contempt for Hollywood's middlebrow tradition-of-quality emerged most clearly in his rejection of the social-problem film, but he never shows how this distinguishes Farber from the middlebrow apologists he chastises. In Farber's review of *Home of the Brave*, he claims that the film "is not clever or ingenious enough to conceal its profit-minded, inept treatment of important issues." Late in his career, Farber chided Richard Lester as exemplifying "a kind of thickness of texture which he gets purely with technique." These are hardly the words of a proponent of pure cinema. For many readers, Farber's abstractionist concentration on texture in narrative films on the one hand, and on narrative in avant-garde films on the other, is easy to see as evidence of a gruff streak of perversity. In any case, given that Taylor's presentation of Farber as cultist depends in large part on the critic's circumvention of content in his work on film, more commentary on Farber's attitudes toward the *content* of movies seems warranted.

Tyler, meanwhile—and much more problematically—is represented as the trailblazing doyen of camp who reverts to "Arnoldean" reactionism once he realizes the decadent

horrors that the influence of his own early excesses has wrought. The only way that such a treatment of Tyler can be sustained, unfortunately, is by erasing Tyler's homosexuality as a crucial determinant on his work. In his evident commitment to neutrality on issues of identity-politics, Taylor considerably minimizes that very factor. Discussion of the gay ramifications of camp is confined to a footnote that ends by declaring that the deemphasis on these issues is intended "to retrieve camp as a term to describe a larger *aesthetic* phenomenon" (167). In the text, Taylor states that Tyler ultimately repudiated camp or mythopoetic criticism in favor of Arnoldean discrimination; in a footnote, Taylor qualifies this claim: "Tyler continued to practice such criticism—albeit sporadically—throughout his career" (171). Here Taylor mentions in passing the most important book of Tyler's late career, *Screening the Sexes: Homosexuality in the Movies* (1972). A glance at this book shows Tyler's camp energies to be in full force; an actual reading of it shows that Tyler, at the end of his career, rejects Arnoldean standards of value as flamboyantly as he had in the 1940s, trouncing supposed art films like *Fellini Satyricon* with the same joyous contempt with which he disparages middlebrow items like *Staircase,* subjecting *Ivan the Terrible* to much the same kind of mythopoetic thrashing he gives *The Great Escape*. Taylor's version of Tyler's career would seem, then, to require something more than parenthetical qualification. It is, no doubt, in the name of that "larger *aesthetic* phenomenon" that Taylor more or less absents *Screening the Sexes* from Tyler's bibliography, but to talk about Tyler as a practitioner of camp without discussing this book is comparable to talking about Eisenstein's North American stint without discussing *¡Que Viva Mexico!*

These issues by no means undermine the essential seriousness of the work, but they gather real force as problems by the last chapter and the conclusion. There, it suddenly becomes disturbingly obvious that the agenda, thankfully quite well hidden until then, has been to retrieve Arnoldean discernment from the clutches of Wildean jest. After a suggestive reading of Richard Kwietniowski's *Love and Death on Long Island* (1996), where the refusal to engage the gay thematics of the text is doubtless once again meant to be seen as evidence of equanimity, Taylor argues for a return to the methods of traditional valuation "to help build and maintain a constituency for film art" (157). At times in the course of the book, with his heavy reliance on highbrow and middlebrow as apparently stable definitions, it had seemed as if Taylor simply could not see that Tyler, Farber, and others were trying to *break down* these categories, not operate within them. In the end, it is clear that he *could* see it: "Challenging the notion that aesthetic value is fixed and inherent, [Farber and Tyler] suggested quite the opposite—that it is variable, contextual, even spectator-centered" (153). But he thinks they were *wrong* to try: "In privileging the marginal or derided, in claiming formal or symbolic intricacy where none exists, we prove again and again that we are more inventive and more profound than the guardians of the culture industry. . . . But we do so at the expense of engaging the larger possibilities of movie art" (157). Even in their own renegade postures, according to Taylor, these critics themselves retained residual aspects of the traditional cultural value they affronted: "The admirable 'artistry' of Farber and Tyler's cultist/camp criticism betrays an underlying commitment to [traditional aesthetic] norms, and to related ideologies" (153).

I find the implications of these claims troubling, especially considering Taylor's own *de*valuation of the "marginal," in the light of his diminishment of the specifically gay valences of camp. It is perhaps a tribute to the meticulousness of Taylor's scholarship, however, that such issues, even as they become more pressing by the book's end, do not become debilitating. This book remains an important contribution to the study of film criticism.

James Morrison's book *Passport to Hollywood* (SUNY, 1998) was selected as a *Choice* Outstanding Academic Book in Film for 1999. His next book, *Broken Fever*, a memoir, will be published by St. Martin's Press.

British Cinema in the Eighties

By John Hill. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1999. $49.95 cloth; $24.95 paper.

British cinema has always presented problems, at least for Americans. What is it about? Is it worth discussing? What on earth has it contributed to world cinema besides some documentary films and kitchen-sink realism? Who are its geniuses? Where are its genres? In short, it is difficult to get British cinema in focus. Whereas attention has always been paid, and rightly so, to Russian, German, and French cinema—to montage, to expressionism, to the New Wave, to neorealism—English cinema has usually been dismissed out of hand and, like a neglected maiden aunt at a family wedding, has skulked in a corner far from the limelight of critical attention.

Here and there a few books have tried to correct that state of affairs, and have tried to show how and why British cinema merits attention. Some years ago, for example, Alexander Walker did a beautiful job on the 60s in his classic study *Hollywood—England* (London: Michael Joseph, 1974). Later he repeated the trick with *National Heroes* (London: Harrap, 1985), a very well-researched work on the 70s. In *British Cinema in the Eighties*, John Hill takes up the baton, and in doing so provides us with one of the most intelligent, serious, and well-written cinematic studies of recent years.

Hill addresses two main questions: What was the changing role of British cinema in the 80s, and how did it deal with identity, including all its national, social-political, and gender strands? These are questions of fundamental importance and are placed against the background of a world film industry increasingly dominated by Hollywood. Because of the depth and the seriousness of the questions, Hill's book of necessity becomes a study in cultural politics, and the ways in which 1980s British filmmaking responded to the social, economic, and cultural characteristics of the period.

Hill's starting point is a survey of Margaret Thatcher's years in office as Prime Minister, roughly 1979 to 1990, her methods of government, her policies, and her ideology. The picture which emerges is largely negative. British filmmakers on the whole were unsympathetic to Thatcherism and challenged many of its values. But, as Hill shows, the filmmakers were working within a deteriorating system. As a result of the Thatcher policies, the film industry itself, never very strong, became considerably weakened and enfeebled. By 1979, Rank, Associated Productions, and EMI, the giants of the industry, had basically pulled out of production. Later they would be joined by Thorn. For a few brief years, Goldcrest would rise like a phoenix with *Ghandi* and *Chariots of Fire*, before succumbing with massive losses. With financial support at its lowest point, the industry had to turn to television for support, to Channel Four, the BBC, and Granada. This in turn encouraged the development of a British art cinema which, as Hills says, "combined the concerns of a national cinema with those of public service television."

This setting of context by Hill takes up the first three chapters of the book. The emphasis on politics, on governmental bureaucracy, on social theories, on Indian and Pakistani immigration, on finance, on subsidies, on television policy, is unusual in a general book on cinema, where the study of text alone has come to dominate film studies. Yet the context is vital. Without that background, meaning often eludes us. Hill uses the rest of the book to discuss the films themselves and the issues they raise. Here the films clearly divide into two categories—those dealing with the past and those dealing with the present. Thus Part Two of the book tackles British history, dividing the subject up into "heritage" films and films about the British Empire. Part Three deals with Britain in the 80s, and what Hill calls "the state of the nation" film. Both sections are fascinating to read, and full of challenging and provocative analyses. The history film is a case in point.

Hill draws on the work of John Corner, Sylvia Harvey, Andrew Higson, David Cannadine, and others to provide a superb critical reading of films such as *Howard's End*, *Maurice*, *A Room with a View*, and many others. First he shows how they have assumed a special niche place in the American market. He then analyzes what is meant by cultural heritage; how it is represented in the films; and how elite culture is passed off as a national heritage. From there the discussion moves on to the nature of acting in these films, their treatment of women and sexuality, and their overarching ability to both celebrate and criticize the past.

As Hill rightly points out, this interest in gender and sexuality also pervaded what became known as "the Raj revival," the imperial heritage films of the 80s, many of which were concerned with India. When films like *Heat and Dust* and *A Passage to India* hit the screen, Salman Rushdie neglected the sexual aspects but criticized them for "refurbishing the Empire's tired image." But the question is more complex. While the Korda films such as *The Four Feathers* and *Sanders of the River* were indeed paeans of praise to the Empire and imperialism, what characterizes recent Raj films is a kind of double standard. Hill, drawing on Harlan Kennedy, sums this up beautifully when he says, "British Empire films represent double standard movie making at its best. On the one hand they offer a severe reproach to British history, but on the other they invest the Empire with considerable visual glamour." In effect, you can have your cake and eat it. But above all, as Hill points out, the Raj films are about "race"—an element that is totally absent from the other heritage films. Here Hill argues that there is a degree of ideological tension in the way in which these films both question and reinforce conventional social and cultural divisions.

The third and last part of Hill's book, and possibly the most fascinating, is concerned with representations of the present. Here the early chapters on Thatcherism really bear fruit. The films discussed—like *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, *Riff-Raff*, and *My Beautiful Laundrette*—are all familiar, but we appreciate them even more when they are explained against the key movements of their time. But as Hill shows, these films are more than an update of the 60s kitchen-sink films. The hunt for room at the top has given way to a new search for class, and for racial and national identity.

To illustrate his analysis of the search for identity, Hill also provides the reader with an in-depth critique of certain key films, such as *Dance with a Stranger* and *The Ploughman's Lunch*, and short essays on the work of a few major filmmakers such as Mike Leigh, Ken Loach, Stephen Frears, and Hanif Kureishi. The selection is correct, the comments insightful, and the conclusions thought-provoking.

Like Shakespeare's Cleopatra, who "makes hungry where most she satisfies," Hill's excellent book leaves you thirsting for more. One has learned about the industry and the films, but now tell us something about the young directors, who they were, where they came from. Tell us about the exodus to the U.S. of some of the best of British talent. Tell us about Tony Blair and a labor government, and tell us about *The Full Monty*, *Brassed Off*, *East Is East*, and *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*. Hopefully that will all come in Hill's next volume.

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Captive Bodies

Postcolonial Subjectivity in Cinema

By Gwendolyn Audrey Foster. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1999. $59.50 cloth; $19.95 paper.

In this book, Foster reads the Hollywood system as a Plantocracy, where filmmakers "have either signed on as Plantocratic overseers of Colonialism, or resisted as models of Postcolonial subjectivities" (6). The author proposes "captivity" as the key similarity between the "slave system" and Hollywood's range of representational institutions and practices, leading her to suggest that captivity is "a palimpsest that draws itself as a power/knowledge grid around the history of filmmaking, film study, and film distribution and the

like" (1). With this audacious conceptualization, *Captive Bodies* perhaps unwittingly uncovers a fault line that runs through postcolonial studies, dividing those scholars who, like Foster, assert a metaphorical and analogical use of the term "postcolonial" from those who wish to highlight the spatiality and historicity of the term.

Foster is interested not only in the image of the bound body in cinema, but also in the idea of bondage as an industrial, social, and disciplinary predicament in the production, consumption, and scholarly criticism of film. Through several readings of images, films, and studio practices, she examines the trope of the body in captivity. The centrality of the notion of bondage in culture is developed by a focus on questions of spectatorial identification (chapter 1), by an examination of parallels between the studio system and the slave system (chapter 2), and with an assertion of the intrinsically pornographic and ethnographic nature of most dominant Hollywood spectacles as well as the enslaving nature of most narratives (chapter 3). The book's reading of these images is defined as postcolonial in that it is interested in a "realm of multiplicities, of possible identities and performed knowledge of self" (26). In effect, Foster looks for alternative histories of active spectatorship and for the "decolonization of the specters" (26). In this pursuit, she examines such phenomena as the "third eye" or the "returned gaze" of the subaltern in colonial images of captivity. The author demonstrates that the "code-switching" narrative techniques and the figure of the trickster heroine of early American women filmmakers (Grace Cunard, Alice Guy-Blaché, Dorothy Davenport) are comparable to textual devices of early female writers of slave and captivity narratives such as Harriet Jacobs, Mary Prince, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. The author also looks at a corpus of artists and filmmakers who aim to displace conventional cinema through forms such as auto-ethnography and performative documentary, and the book contains two very interesting interviews conducted by Foster with Barbara Hammer and Trinh T. Minh-ha.

The concluding chapter, "Disciplining Discourse," turns to theoretical boundaries that have "contained" discussions of popular culture. In this context, it is relevant to question Foster's own use of slavery, colonialism, and postcolonial subjectivity as tropes that are applicable to an analysis of Hollywood studios, films, and independent filmmakers. On one occasion, the author mentions that she wishes to emphasize the difference between the literally captive bodies under slavery and the theoretically captive bodies of "Hollywood Plantocracy" (48). Invoking Spivak's injunction that an intellectual must not abstain from representation, Foster asks, "As cultural critics, are we not morally obligated at some level to speak the unspeakable, to deconstruct the parallel systems of imperialism through their own languages and practices?" And further: "in attempting to contain all discussion of slavery and Plantocratic method within the boundaries of purely historically discursive methodologies and projects, are we not once again erasing difference, and furthering the project of American racism?" (48).

And yet, Spivak's consideration of the subaltern question brings to the fore most forcefully the fact that intellectuals always need to examine the consequences of their representation. It is here, with reference to the "to what end?" question, that Foster's work may be seen as revealing a fissure within postcolonial studies. In an excellent essay titled "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'" (*Social Text*, 31/32 [1992]), Ella Shohat examines the term postcolonial to raise "questions about its ahistorical and universalizing deployments, and its potentially depoliticizing implications" (99). Shohat recognizes that the term permits a geo-political critique beyond the binarism of center-periphery relations between the First and the Third World, allowing an analysis of the encounter beyond the narrowly economic that is inclusive of cultural hybridity and syncretism. However, she notes that the formulation of the postcolonial beyond spatial and temporal specificity "collapses very different national-racial formulations . . . as equally post-colonial" (102) in that they all live in a "post-colonial epoch" that may, of course, also be defined as "neo-colonial."

This is not to deny that there may be similarities between oppressive systems, neither is it to silence discussions of those similarities, but rather to address specific parallels between oppressions with the awareness that totalizing references to all repressive cultural systems as "colonial" and all resistance as "postcolonial" homogenize distinct political structures and evacuate the terms of their critical value. Foster's book foregrounds the dynamics of several representational and institutional practices that are productively highlighted as colonial and postcolonial. And yet, there is a great slipperiness to the author's use of the term. Frequently, the author identifies all silencing as colonial ("Early women's films have often been derisively dismissed as unimportant, non-feminist, melodramatic, or derivative, in a Colonialist display of voice suppression" [75]); several theorists as postcolonial critics (including Baudrillard, Deleuze and Guattari, and Judith Butler [187]); and perplexingly, any import from Britain as colonial, including the field of cultural studies ("It seems possible that one of the reasons Cultural Studies may be having a bit of trouble defining itself in the United States is that Postcolonial American critics have a healthy skepticism to things Colonial" [192]). *Captive Bodies* opens up avenues of analysis by being uninhibited by what the author terms "purely historically discursive methodologies." But in the opinion of this reviewer, a complete movement to the realm of metaphor from the realm of spatio-temporal and geo-political specificity is politically disabling. Fortunately, to the extent that the term postcolonial enables the work of scholars committed to the examination of power and discourse, it also creates a space for dialogue between a book such as *Captive Bodies* and a review such as this one.

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The Cinema of Anxiety

A Psychoanalysis of Italian Neorealism

By Vincent F. Rocchio. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1999. $35.00 cloth; $17.95 paper.

Vincent F. Rocchio's book, *The Cinema of Anxiety: A Psychoanalysis of Italian Neorealism*, is structured around the case studies of three neorealist films—Roberto Rossellini's *Rome: Open City*, Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*, Luchino Visconti's *La terra trema*—and two other films that the author considers on the periphery of neorealism—Giuseppe De Santis' *Bitter Rice* and Luchino Visconti's *Senso*. Combining psychoanalysis and narratology, and drawing on Marxist critical theory (mainly in the sixth chapter), his study brings a Lacanian framework to reconsider the relationship between text, meaning, subject, and the functioning of desire in signification. It provides the reader with a detailed analysis of the structure of cinematic discourse and the strategies of containment specifically addressed by these five films. It also refers to the problematics of the historical spectatorship and the political issues revolving around the Italian postwar period (topics already addressed by Cesare Zavattini and by many critics and filmmakers, neorealist or not).

The social and political issues imaged in many neorealist filmic texts express the sense of unrest—of anxiety, as Rocchio prefers—that was a constant during the war, the Occupation, the fights of the Resistance, and life in postwar reconstruction. They represent a very remarkable set of circumstances and facts that remain of the utmost importance, and the sense of instability and displacement directly experienced by the postwar generations has occupied several scholars for decades and still does. What is new in Rocchio's study is not so much the affirmation that there was anxiety within postwar Italian culture, but his psychoanalytic discussion of this sense of unrest, which he locates beyond the Imaginary, in the Symbolic, with the Resistance as a signifier-in-dominance.

The book is divided into seven chapters preceded by a very personal introduction that attempts to justify the tools of the investigation. Discussing neorealism only marginally, the opening chapter examines, through a large overview, the relationship and the impact that psychoanalysis has had on the cinema. Chapter 2 offers a discussion in psychoanalytic terms of the unity of discourse in *Rome: Open City*, and the author tries to demonstrate that the narrative trajectory and structure of the film constitutes an answer to the understanding of the ideological threats that were the destabilizing cause of a national culture in crisis.

The third chapter centers on *Bicycle Thieves*—which is a more accurate translation—and considers the relationship between characters, authority, and the Symbolic identification on the level of the structure of identity. The construction of the various characters and their functions as critical sites would lead, according to the author, to the final restoration of patriarchy at the end of the film, exemplified and sanctioned by the son's acceptance of the father's failure. The son's place then becomes "the place of the historical spectator which is asked to accept the legitimacy of Italian patriarchal-capitalist culture" (76). In the fourth chapter, on *La terra trema*, Rocchio continues to explore the role of structure and its expositional function relating to the concept of unity of discourse and to the concept of authority, analyzing in great detail the function of interactive narration provided by a voiceover—the plot structure demonstrating the functional characteristic of anxiety (83).

Chapters 5 and 6 consider, respectively, *Bitter Rice* and *Senso*, two films the author labels as "transitional texts." The analysis of *Bitter Rice* centers on recognition requests via Lacan's discussion of the function of communications as recognition, and explores the structure of identity "as it relates to the process of misrecognition and its relationship to the unity of discourses and relations of authority" (80). The parallel between the period of nineteenth-century Risorgimento and that of the post-WWII years in *Senso* does not consider the position of many critics, such as Carlo Lizzani (also a filmmaker who lived neorealism from within), who see the film's structure, its aim, and intention as having already left behind the apprehensions of neorealism, which had almost become a "genre" itself. For these critics, the film lies outside the connotation of the social and political landscape of classic neorealist films—much further away than their periphery. Indeed, its variants and schema already point to the concerns of another cinema.

The final chapter, which stands as a coda to the others, summarizes the significance and the advantages of a text-based psychoanalytic critique and its strategies of containment. It relies, however, on some forced comparisons and statements that are assumed rather than explained.

Situating the films' signifying practices under the scrutiny of psychoanalysis, this new approach invites the reader to think with Jacques Lacan, and also, occasionally, with Slavoj Zizek's reading of Lacan. It adds a psychoanalytic investigation of the "interior spaces" to the extensive work of previous scholarship on the importance of open filmic spaces and their visual geometries which drown the individuality of the Subject. Yet the concept of "Lacanian ideological analysis" and the application of psychoanalysis does not always work. At times it appears as a mechanical exercise with broad assumptions that tries to explain the politics of neorealism and its place in history. While taking our knowledge of neorealism into the investigative field of psychoanalysis, this study never confronts the resistance against any psychoanalytic interpretation, as was proposed by Zavattini (considered by many "the father" of neorealism, he is, surprisingly, never mentioned in this book).

With the hypothesis of a completely diverse type of interpretation, Rocchio avoids the necessary negotiation with the past. He dismisses "traditional readings of neorealism," which he believes lack the historical dimension of spectatorship and focus solely on scope and casuality. This is hardly the case. The decades of *impegno politico*, of critical, historical, and political debates entertained by, among oth-

ers, Guido Aristarco, Zavattini, Lino Micciché, Gian Piero Brunetta, De Santis, and Rossellini (both as filmmakers and critics) revolved around neorealist problematics affecting the sender and the recipient of the filmic (and cultural) message. This most active and prolific commitment fed on the consciousness of what was happening historically and politically.

The wealth of all these diverse and contrasting positions and the empirical knowledge they represent should not be overlooked, as they ultimately led to the understanding that neorealism involved manneristic excursions that surpassed the mere recording of social reality and contained a blend of cultural hybrids. Within the phenomenon of neorealism were embedded what, in the early 60s, Zavattini labeled "incrustations"; the addenda he saw as denoting meaning formations in the complex relationship between filmic text and spectatorship. Moreover, neorealism was not only a filmic phenomenon; its mercurial qualities also appeared in other areas like literature and the figurative arts. That is why a discussion of that period cannot simply start from a *tabula rasa*.

One of the interesting points addressed by Rocchio's analysis is the recognition that neorealist film narratives offer alternative realities by means of introducing, at strategic moments in the plot, characters or activities that work to subvert and disrupt the comforting sense of a single plane of things. The hermeneutic function of Rocchio's study is better served when it focuses, with cleverly chosen illustrations, on a series of examples and on the structural making of each film, and when the range of his investigation remains within a single film, like the insightful comments on *La terra trema*'s use of voiceover (87-90).

The analysis becomes inadequate when general conclusions that include the Italian political scene are drawn. Comments on the cultural and political debates are referred to in almost fragment-sentences that work more as an afterthought. This study might not be very convincing for someone who has lived the post-neorealism years directly and has participated in the debates and carried the burden of the neorealist legacy. The bibliographic apparatus is also rather limited in terms of referencing the most recent publications in Italian on the subject, and more attention could have been paid to minor but distracting inaccuracies. Notwithstanding these limitations, however, the volume adds another viewpoint to the ongoing debate on the problematic neorealist question and contributes to a wider understanding of neorealism and its undeletable signs. Overall, Rocchio's study appears more appropriate for an audience already versed in the topic of neorealism; it should not be the only reading on the subject for students who approach, for the first time, the thorny questions of this important moment in history and its set of ideas. The volume remains a piece of the puzzle, a tool for a more experienced reader who can discern the good sections of the analysis and give them space.

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Contemporary Hollywood Cinema

Edited by Steve Neale and Murray Smith. New York: Routledge, 1998. $80.00 cloth; $26.95 paper.

In 1985, David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson attempted to survey and define the styles and production methods of Hollywood from the 20s to the early 60s. For the purposes of their discussion, they called the subject of their study "classical Hollywood cinema." Since then, revolution has hit Hollywood. But what does this radical change consist of? New technologies? New forms of narrative? New methods of production? The questions lie thick on the ground.

In *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, Steve Neale and Murray Smith have assembled 19 articles which they hope will provide the reader with some of the answers. The questions are elicited and discussed under four main headings: Hollywood historiography; economics, industry, and institutions; aesthetics and technology; and audience, address, and ideology. It's an interesting if strange mixture, somewhat like being offered Chinese, Italian, and French cuisine all at one sitting.

For my money, the best section is that on economics and the industry. Here four excellent articles by Douglas Gomery, Tino Balio, Justin Wyatt, and James Schamus explore the growth of independent and package production, the significance of major independents such as New Line and Miramax, the impact of television, and the globalization of Hollywood markets. What comes out very clearly is that Hollywood cinema no longer exists in isolation. In order to survive, it has become part of a worldwide integrated software business. The only problem in this section, maybe unavoidable in articles written in isolation, is the repetition of the same introductory facts regarding change since 1940. Read together, however, the articles provide a very good introductory overview regarding the framework of the Hollywood industry today.

The following section is devoted to aesthetics and technology, and the seven articles selected here range from issues of Dolby sound and widescreen composition to the aesthetic characteristics of Hollywood blockbusters such as *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Bram Stoker's Dracula.* While all the writing is interesting, the most important article in the section is probably Michael Allen's essay on cinema technology today. After reviewing technological change since the 1950s, Allen argues that it is the need for increasingly spectacular realism that acts as the driving force in the development of film technology. He then discusses why technology must adapt to narrative strategies if it wants to generate a sufficient return on the high cost of research and development.

The fourth section of the book, which focuses on audience, address, and ideology is more of a ragbag, ranging from topics such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class to genre and spectatorship. Here the best essay is Tommy Lott's

on Hollywood and independent black cinema. After a survey of recent writing on black independent and Hollywood cinema, Lott questions the validity of the so-called divisions between the two. He notes the increasing elements of overlap between Hollywood and the independents, and refuses to condemn Hollywood's output on a priori political grounds.

The other essays in the section cover the changing fortunes of established genres, such as the woman's picture, and emerging trends, such as female action heroines, the yuppie horror film, and the family-adventure movie. What is common to most of the essays by writers as various as Pam Cook, Hilary Radner, Barry Grant, Steven Cohan, and Peter Kramer is a refreshing lack of cant and an ability to examine film trends without being bound by hard-line political, psychological, or Marxist assumptions. All this should be applauded.

Contemporary Hollywood Cinema is a useful book; it will help the student; and yet it left me slightly unsatisfied. And I think I know why. Firstly, the book is just not complete enough. This may be due to its being primarily a collection of essays given at a particular academic conference, the editors necessarily having to take what was available. Even so, the collection calls desperately for another section on writers, directors, and their motivations, methods, and practices. It also demands a deeper analysis of the relationship between audience research and subject choice, and a study of the links between story selection, the writer's position, and the producer's vision.

A more important deficiency is the lack of an overarching essay on the part of the editors. They do a good job of introducing the individual contributions, but fail to integrate the disparate parts of the book. As it stands, production, aesthetics, and audience seem to exist in three different and isolated universes, whereas, in reality, they all interrelate. Had this vital point been discussed in slightly more depth, everyone would have benefited.

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DEFA

East German Cinema, 1946-1992

By Seán Allan and John Sandford. New York: Berghahn Books, 1999. $69.95 cloth; $25.00 paper.

This anthology represents a welcome addition to a sparse but growing body of film scholarship; namely, that covering the cinema of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). The long-winded legal process of rendering distribution rights for the products of East Germany's state-run film industry, DEFA (Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft), which produced some 600 films during its 40-year existence, has only recently begun to bear productive results in the form of greater availability of pertinent films to the general public and to educational institutions. The latter is made possible in North America, at least, through the establishment of the DEFA film library at the University of Massachusetts, in cooperation with the commercial distributor Icestorm International. While several comprehensive texts on GDR film history and criticism have been published in both the former GDR as well as in unified Germany, Allan and Sandford are the first to undertake such a venture in the English language. The volume was compiled from papers delivered at a conference on East German cinema hosted by the University of Reading's Centre for East German Studies; the first such event held outside Germany, it is clearly indicative of the growing international interest in understanding this previously sheltered national cinema.

The essays cover a wide swath of territory, beginning with a historical overview in which Seán Allan outlines some of the early ideological and aesthetic conflicts that were to trouble production of many films throughout DEFA history. Early negotiations between the Central Committee of the SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands) and the diverse writers and directors within the DEFA were driven by the search for new forms and new subject matter that would distinguish socialist cinema from the melodramatic manipulations of earlier UFA (Universal Film Aktiengesellschaft) films—those produced prior to and during the National Socialist regime. Socialist realism precipitated out of this struggle and underwent novel permutations in relation to alternating periods of political thaw and chill within the East German government and within Soviet bloc countries.

Allan does an excellent job of summarizing the most significant tides of social tolerance following the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik and official recognition of the GDR in 1969, while also outlining the most demoralizing periods of artistic restraint (such as that following the Eleventh Plenum in 1965, when 11 films were banned and several directorial careers were effectively terminated). And finally, he points to the manner in which the filmic preoccupation with the role of artists and women in GDR society during the 1970s and early 80s afforded a means to metonymically interrogate the status of personal fulfillment under conditions of socialism.

Barton Byg's contribution seeks to contextualize the DEFA within the traditions of international cinema, contrasting aesthetic developments in East and West Germany while also drawing parallels with trends in European cinema generally. He maintains that the cinema of the GDR was more "German" and more "national," in part because its anti-Fascist stance enabled a less radical break with the past, one in which the bourgeois cultural tradition could still be assimilated as evidence of continuity with the humanistic ideals of socialism. While the West sought to eradicate social and political practices that might recall the Fascist past, the East sustained greater continuities, for example, maintaining a centralized film industry not unlike the earlier UFA of the 1930s. Extending his comparisons into the international arena, Byg points out that early DEFA feature films engaged the same modernist concerns as European cinema and U.S. film noir. Neorealism similarly found its parallel in the social-realist film, and the mythical dimensions of nation-

building, frontier struggle, and masculinity characteristic of the Western action drama find their corollary in GDR films of the 1950s.

Overall, the essays in this anthology are valuable not only for their substantive critical assessments but also for their painstaking archival documentation and citation of key journals and textual sources, offering a rare source of comprehensive reference material for a still nascent domain of film scholarship. Among the topics covered are the so-called Berlin Films of Gerhard Klein and Wolfgang Kohlhaase, representations of work from the banned films of 1965, Kurt Maetzig's *Das Kaninschen bin ich,* the films of Konrad Wolf, the role of the media journal *Film und Fernsehen* as a litmus of contemporary cultural currents, the role of women in films of the 70s and 80s, a reevaluation of Goethe and the classical tradition in GDR film, Roland Gra f's film adaptions, a retrospective of Ju rgen Boettcher, and films by Andreas Voigt documenting the Wende. Also included are a transcribed discussion with Kurt Maetzig and the speech delivered by Wolfgang Kohlhaase at the University of Reading.

A few contributions seem to lack theoretical sophistication, assigning filmic representation a too literal capacity to mirror GDR history and social life with little consideration for the mediating role of the cinematic apparatus and the interventions of desire. An overly facile distinction between politically motivated and authentic representations, between propaganda and art, seems to accompany this proclivity for literalizing film narrative—a stance seemingly impervious to the infinite corruptibility of text and discourse, whose structures can be filled with any ideological content that serves a given purpose. Similarly, the topic of state censorship is treated exclusively as a device for overt constraint, overlooking the so-called "constructive" implications of censorship, insofar as it comprises one of many delimiting intermediaries that positively constitute a text as such. And while we are on the topic of ideological investment, within this international collection of essays it was often intriguing to be able to detect the cultural/national origin of individual authors without even a glance at supplementary biographical information. While articles by scholars from the former GDR frequently exhibited a more nuanced understanding of the specificity of the films in relation to historical events, as well as greater tolerance for the statist rhetoric of anti-Fascism and of socialist policy, among the U.S. and British scholars a subtle form of "othering" was occasionally detectable—a perhaps unavoidable consequence when broaching material outside one's immediate personal experience and, furthermore, a vantage point that offers its own lucid insights. Occasionally, greater editorial rigor would have been welcome to more elegantly render stilted syntax in essays by non-native writers of English. Overall, however, both the historical breadth of topics covered and their discursive accessibility make this an ideal text for German film classes.

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Endless Night

Cinema and Psychoanalysis, Parallel Histories

Edited by Janet Bergstrom. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999. $45.00 cloth; $17.95 paper.

The nearly simultaneous creation of psychoanalysis and cinema in fin-de-si e cle Europe has been frequently noted; likewise, the nearly concurrent migration of both institutions across the Atlantic, where both became firmly embedded in the American popular imagination within a few decades. Glen and Krin Gabbard mordantly observe that "if (psychoanalytic) psychiatry had not existed, the movies would have had to invent it" (*Psychiatry and the Cinema*, 1999). From the silent era until today, therapist characters have proven exceptionally useful narrative facilitators—generating flashbacks, spurring dramatic revelations, etc.

Freud, however, did not reciprocate Hollywood's captivation with his undertaking. He utterly scorned the cinematic representation of psychoanalysis. Despite the abundant film masterpieces produced by the time of his death in 1939, he never deemed a single picture worthy of the "applied analysis" he practiced upon the verbal and other visual arts. For years, most of his clinical inheritors maintained his disaffection, at least in print.

Matters stood otherwise in the cinema scholarship community which evolved on the Continent and migrated to American universities during the 60s and 70s. Psychoanalysis—notably the idiosyncratic Freudianism of Jacques Lacan—dominated film theory for a generation, variably conflated with semiotics, Marxism, feminism, deconstructionism, and so forth. But with psychoanalytic practice withering today under the lash of managed care and Freud everywhere denigrated, movies have finally been deemed worthy of investigation by clinicians. Ironically, "Lacan-analysis" and other more orthodox analytic approaches have lost much of their luster for the academy and have been replaced by archival investigation and other *a la page* strategies. Some former enthusiasts even insinuate that psychoanalysis has wielded a disproportionate and unhelpful influence upon cinema scholarship. Gross oversimplification, ignorance about industry practice, and the specificity of cinema aesthetics are cited as reasons for the current scholarly disaffection with psychoanalysis.

Into this inauspicious climate—almost as a *cri du coeur*—comes *Endless Night*, a collection of essays on the strange bedfellowship between psychoanalysis and cinema (film scholarship implied under the latter category). Judiciously edited by Janet Bergstrom, the articles are uniformly impressive, whether authored by luminaries or less well-known investigators. Some studies interrogate (and reflect) the chronic uneasiness between psychoanalysis and film theory. Elsewhere, psychoanalytic methodology—not exclusively Lacanian—is unambivalently deployed to probe character, directorial intention, and hidden textual operations in mainstream and art cinema. Those new to this recondite field are advised that a fair amount of the material is exceptionally demanding—but fortunately unburdened

by obscurantist elitism. Bergstrom's introduction cogently recapitulates the dilemmas engendered by the encounter between psychoanalysis and film theory. She seconds Christian Metz's demand for keen awareness of the complexity of the analytic project, implicitly eschewing its oversimplification and deradicalization by the naïve in either camp. Film theory should be dynamic and changing, itself subject to inquiry with due awareness of its historical grounding. The rigidly formalized Lacanian conceptual framework of the 70s must be especially reevaluated, to clarify how its prized psychoanalytic tropes (e.g., the "mirror stage") not only framed but arguably limited its effectiveness.

Stephen Heath's opening essay elegantly elaborates Bergstrom's concerns. For Heath, psychoanalysis and cinema uncannily constitute each other's never fully apprehended Other. He is vexed that psychoanalytic film theory bids to become as drably reductionistic as those clumsy cinematic attempts to portray the analytic milieu which, at least in part, compelled Freud's enduring distaste for the medium. Heath particularly questions the "pure specularity" of suture theory, in which the viewer is conceived as a mindless robot to be facilely manipulated according to whatever hegemonic ideology is dictated by the "cinematic apparatus."

Mary Anne Doane explores intriguing analogies and disparities between Freud's conceptualization of mental topography and the chronophotographic project of his contemporary, Etienne-Jules Marey. Freud famously perceived the unconscious as timeless; time itself as an essentially unrepresentable illusion. On the other hand, Marey was obsessed with capturing time's diamond-hard, ever more divisible tangibility. But Marey and Freud were also both preoccupied with the possibility of infinite storage as bulwark against the ravages of time—inscription within the psychic apparatus for Freud, or on the photographic plate for Marey. In a daring conceptual leap, Doane theorizes that the unmediated scene of primal "Lumière" cinema provoked ineluctable angst over the potential of a banal plenitude; time itself then would be rendered contingent, thus essentially meaningless. Under this rubric, the rapid evolution of narrative in early cinema reads as an attempt to produce a "time effect" which protects the subject from the anxieties of a Marey-like "absolute legibility," the promise (or threat) of total representation latent in the Lumière project.

Slavoj Zizek, spearcarrier of the New Lacanians, wins the collection's pride of place for daunting difficulty. He conducts a dizzy tour through the pleasures and pitfalls of virtual reality in "Cyberspace, or the Unbearable Closure of Being." VR à la Zizek is the ultimate "other place" of the Freudian unconscious, an enticing shuck fabricated from an infinite ludic dance of signification. The wired universe renders an already attenuated postmodern self even more insubstantial: one joyously surrenders to a supreme technological colonization of the body.

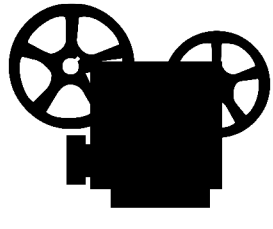
Two papers, by Peter Wollen and David James Fisher, address the aborted collaboration between Jean-Paul Sartre and John Huston on the latter's filmic biography of Sigmund Freud. Wollen discovers a fascinating parallelism in the abiding fascination Sartre, Huston, and Freud had for adventure and conquest, as well as a compelling desire for distance from the paternal. For Fisher, Sartre's script comprises a major event in French intellectual history and the evolution of Sartrean thought. Working on the project provoked Sartre's most rigorous self-analysis, enabling him to identify with and admire Freud's striving toward understanding, authentic "intersubjective" dialogue with patients, and courageous boldness about taking on intellectual and moral struggles with the establishment.

Janet Walker's essay addresses the excision from *Freud* (1962) and *Kings Row* (1942) of the references to incest in Huston's script and Henry Bellamann's novel. She draws analogies between the dissociative defense mechanisms of incest/rape victims and various "post-traumatic" textual and extra-textual operations in classic Hollywood narratives concerned with incest. These locutions, like their clinical counterparts, both conceal and betray censored material. The "nightmarish disguises" of sexual attack—provoked by a threatened return of material "repressed" by the Hays Office—encompass a curious excessive, irrational quality of the film text and an excess proliferation of "alters" involved with processing the forbidden material: alternate script versions, studio memos, publicity material, etc.

Endless Night concludes with Janet Bergstrom's penetrating study of Chantal Akerman's films. Akerman is a child of Polish Holocaust survivors. She avoids speaking of personal experience, but Bergstrom discovers the conflicted signatures of survivorship and its desolating inheritance throughout the director's oeuvre—including pictures ostensibly unrelated to the Holocaust such as *Jeanne Dielman* (1975). Akerman creatively mobilizes her position in an exquisitely balanced discourse inflected by meditative solitude. Her Holocaust-related films and installations afford opportunity for communal grieving by filling the void of "not knowing." Besides recuperating memories of the Nazi trauma, Akerman struggles to redeem a vital, orally transmitted culture which has been tragically gathered into the survivors' muteness along with traumatic recollection. Her efforts particularly address the loss of traditions "spoken" by mothers to their daughters.

Endless Night is happily devoid of shrill polemics, refreshing for the pluralism of its contributions. The diversity would seem to bode well for the future of this challenging, rewarding endeavor—were it not for one's doubts that psychoanalytically inflected film criticism has a future.

Harvey Greenberg is the author of *Screen Memories: Hollywood Cinema on the Psychoanalytic Couch* (Columbia University Press, 1993).



Feminist Hollywood

From *Born in Flames* to *Point Break*

By Christina Lane. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2000. $39.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

Feminist Hollywood is an ambitious and enterprising book that seeks to illuminate the relationship between independent and mainstream cinema through an exploration of the careers and films of six female directors. The project is timely and necessary inasmuch as the increasingly close relationship between the practices of independent filmmakers and Hollywood mandates that film scholars rethink the approaches and categories that have hitherto dominated both stylistic and economic analyses of the film industry. As female and minority directors become more prominent, their impress on their films and on the industry needs to be explored and defined. While Lane's effort to demonstrate the relationship between feminist politics and film style does not always bear fruit, her book nonetheless suggests that auteurism still has its attractions and uses as a critical tool.

The most confident and helpful parts of *Feminist Hollywood* provide institutional information and contextual details on the careers of the chosen six directors: Susan Seidelman, Martha Coolidge, Kathryn Bigelow, Lizzie Borden, Darnell Martin, and Tamra Davis. Except for Seidelman, each gets a chapter to herself, which consists of an overview of the director's career or other contextual information followed by a group of close readings of the director's films. Lane seems most comfortable analyzing directors whose work can clearly be identified as feminist and whose oeuvre is by now reasonably substantial; the greater experience of such directors offers the viewer/critic some sense of development over time. Thus Lane's most successful chapters treat Borden and Coolidge, directors whose careers started in the 1970s and who worked for a time in a filmmaking idiom that could be described as outside the contemporary mainstream.

To be sure, Lane's choice of directors gives rise to a generational problem that the book never quite solves. While she argues that all six of her directors began their careers on the "political margins" (46), there is, in fact, a substantial difference in degree of politicization and nature of artistic strategy between figures such as Borden and Coolidge on the one hand and Martin and Davis on the other. Martin and Davis, and other directors who began their careers in the 1980s and 1990s, did so at a time when stylistic and even economic distinctions between independent cinema and Hollywood were already beginning to break down. Moreover, eight-minute student projects or music videos for MTV don't represent the same kind of avant-garde activity that is signaled by, say, Borden's *Born in Flames*.

Admittedly, part of the problem here is the difficulty of uniting these six directorial subjects along any single stylistic or thematic axis. Carefully nuanced description (which Lane certainly provides) reveals their differences as much as it does their similarities. The question of why these six directors constitute a coherent slice of women's relationship to the film industry never fully emerges from this treatment. Furthermore, the auteurist approach presents these directors in something of a vacuum, so that we may not be sure how the "feminist filmmaking" here discussed—a body of work characterized, Lane finds, by fissures and ideological contradictions—differs from the oeuvre of male postmodernists such as Ridley Scott, who are similarly entranced by discontinuity. Indeed, the reader may detect a certain discomfort on the author's part with the present organization of the material, perhaps signaled rhetorically by the repetition of the phrase "I am not suggesting. . . ."

The book's great strength is its wealth of helpful institutional detail and historical context. Moreover, Lane has enterprisingly augmented her institutional material with interviews conducted with all six of her subjects, offering new insights into how these women perceive their relationships to their audiences, to the film industry, and to their male colleagues. Sadly, Lane has been poorly served by her copy editor; readers may also be wearied by the large number of constructions designed to tell us what the book is not going to do. But although her argument would have emerged more forcefully with more precise and more positive writing, Lane is nonetheless a self-aware writer—frequently refreshingly so, as when she relates the ways in which her interviews with her subjects have obliged her to change her own views on women's relationship to the film industry. She also ranges widely over the pertinent critical literature.

To be sure, Lane's thorough overview of secondary sources proves in some respects to be a mixed blessing. While the book is extremely well referenced, it is also less unified in its thematic preoccupations than it might be. The initial chapter contains an extensive rehearsal of critical theory, ranging from Laura Mulvey to examinations of auteurism—necessarily a major consideration. While the relevance of this theory to the project is usually apparent, it tends not to be applied where it might do the most good. Rather, the introduction serves as a kind of theory ghetto, to be referred to somewhat inconsistently in subsequent chapters.

In other words, the work of each director raises a particular set of questions, for which the introduction may or may not have prepared us. Arguably, not every director's work lends itself to the tack that Lane wants to take on the gaze or on genre revision. Later chapters suggest that with the exception of auteurism, most of Lane's preoccupations are not in fact the ones previewed in the introduction. Notions of gender performativity and the place of documentary in women's filmmaking gradually emerge as potential unifiers across the work of the range of directors (although the introduction presents gender performativity, among other ideas, in such general terms that the preview is less useful than it might have been).

On the other hand, Lane's close readings are often compelling, although even there the reader sometimes senses that the larger project has disappeared into the details. The close readings are designed to test the relationship between nonmainstream and mainstream filmmaking in the work of each director in order to expose how female directors both reshape and accommodate themselves to Hollywood. As

Lane puts it, textual analysis should result in our better understanding "at a material level, the ways in which identification is reinforced or troubled, how a gaze might be constructed or usurped, and how agency might be structured or questioned" (18). But she finds this exercise rather easier in the more obviously avant-garde work of Borden and Coolidge than in Bigelow's mainstream work. Lane's project, of course, is made extremely difficult by Hollywood's cooptation of the stylistic elements of the avant garde; if "feminist Hollywood" and Hollywood in general can produce a more or less identical product, it becomes harder to argue that these filmmaking entities are indeed distinct.

But if this study has its infelicities, it is nonetheless a promising and insightful work, one that has much to offer future scholars researching this topic. Lane has produced a thoughtful treatment of the place of female directors in and out of Hollywood over the past 30 years, and the questions she raises here will surely continue to be of interest.

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The Fruit Machine

Twenty Years of Writing on Queer Cinema

By Thomas Waugh. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000. $54.95 cloth; $17.95 paper.

"The fact that we don't say 'movement' anymore with any confidence is telling," writer-director John Greyson remarks in his foreword to this collection of "twenty years of writing on queer cinema" by his good friend Tom Waugh. "We certainly don't say 'liberation.' We don't even say 'we.'"

Indeed. What *do* we say? What *are* we called? Who are "we" anyway? The hero of Patrice Chereau's *Those Who Love Me Can Take the Train* asks these very questions of his lover in the first reel. Reading Waugh's book immediately after seeing *Those Who Love Me*—and finding it the most important gay film made to date—provoked regret that Waugh didn't get a chance to write about it for this volume. Not that he would necessarily have shared my enthusiasm. For as Waugh observes of Fassbinder's *Fox and His Friends*, "Any film touching on the subject of homosexuality is bound to be controversial—we've been denied the right of self-expression and the right to see ourselves on the screen for so long that we expect every gay film that comes along to make up for it all. Which is of course impossible. No film can meet such expectations."

Still, the casual forthrightness of Chereau's Altman-in-a-Cuisinart ensemble piece about a funeral and its aftermath comes awfully close to this seeming impossibility. For the first time, the gay characters are presented matter-of-factly, and the *straight* ones are required to explain themselves. Back in the mid-70s, when *Fox* was released, the exact opposite was the case. The spectatorial "we" was heterosexual by definition, and the same-sex oriented were phantasmic interlopers—subjects to be "studied" from the far side of a *cordon sanitaire* established in the late nineteenth century by medical and legal "authorities," rather than human beings capable of speaking, and acting, on their own behalf. That grotesque state of cultural affairs has come to an end, thanks to some degree to filmmakers like Fassbinder. But a far larger role has been played by the activists, who, as Greyson notes, "picketed *Cruising* and thus changed forever our passive relationship to dominant cinema."

But then the AIDS epidemic hit, killing off the better portion of that politically and culturally committed community—including its most important scholar, Vito Russo—and leaving in its wake a culture, both gay and straight, forever altered in ways we're only now beginning to comprehend. A measure of such alterations can be found in Greyson's observation that "a decade later in the epicenter of the pandemic, my queer film class watched *Cruising* with uncritical awe; for them it was an ethnographic account of a distant culture that had gone with the wind."

The Fruit Machine is an ideal text for such a class. Not that a simple reading of it will answer any and all questions. Its "squibbishness" (Greyson's telling term for its terse, hit-and-run style) forestalls such assumptions. Indeed, even a complex reading—checking Waugh's observations alongside those of Russo's, Richard Dyer's, Parker Tyler's, D.A. Miller's, and Greyson's own in such films and videos as *Zero Patience, Urinal*, and *Moscow Does Not Believe in Queers*—can only begin to probe the surface of what Waugh wants to explore. For, as Greyson forthrightly declares, "This volume is a record of an evolving movement, and an evolving language," and as such is tentative. That's a risky stance to take in the groves of academe—where theory shelters the meek from polemic's furious power, and forthright critical assessment is as rare as a network interview with Noam Chomsky. More to the point, even on a purely polemical level, Waugh knows he's facing "readers who are too young to remember *Longtime Companion*, let alone *A Very Natural Thing*." So what's a gay film critic to do? The best s/he can. And part of that "best" is not treating one's own word as gospel.

Time and time again, Waugh berates himself for missing points he should have made. Being "wrong, wrong, wrong" about Derek Jarman's *Sebastiane*, for instance—comparing it unfavorably to hard-core porn in 1978, saying today that "perhaps I was unable to distance my critical response from my own troubled arousal by all those nude Roman soldiers playing frisbee." By contrast, he feels that "*Parting Glances*, a film unanimously acclaimed on its release, now seems to offer by and large a sexual discourse that is somewhat less affirmative of gay sexuality than may have first appeared." And if that's not enough, "*An Early Frost* no longer looks as bad as it once did, despite all the energy that went into dismantling it—so sue me."

No one's going to sue Waugh—even for calling ex-*Advocate* editor David Goodstein "the General Pinochet of Gay Lib." Still, while we should all be thankful for his scoring Jacques Aumont's raging homophobia (the noted French

critic regards the slightest consideration of the director/theorist's obvious same-sex affinity as beneath contempt), it's a shame Waugh doesn't mention Nestor Almendros's hailing Eisenstein's Mapplethorpe-like homoeroticism in an article written shortly before the great cinematographer's death from AIDS (*Film Comment*, July-August [1991]), especially as Waugh criticizes Almendros for being "closeted" elsewhere in the book.

But this, in turn, brings us to the title, which is derived from the slang moniker Canadian police gave to a device utilized to interrogate sex offenders. "The idea is to unmask perverts by measuring involuntary pupilary dilation and other physiological reactions to pictures and words." Waugh's book is a way of putting *himself* though such a machine. But just as with the original "fruit machine," answers aren't easy to come by, as Waugh discovers. "It's possible to decode a slow struggle toward an affirmation of sexuality in Murnau's films. But is there a parallel with his actual life?" The critic asks—and finds himself unable to satisfactorily answer. How could he? How could Murnau possibly embody a wish for sexual affirmation that Waugh well knows millions have struggled for, and achieved, facing far more dire odds than that of the celebrated silent director.

More characteristically, speaking of Hitchcock's *Rope*, scripted by Arthur Laurents, Waugh quips, "Quite obviously the only way to express your sexual difference directly, at least in Hollywood, was within established homophobic conventions, and the most appropriate convention was the film noir. So what if your gay characters were cold-blooded killers—at least they had wit and style, which is a lot more than costar Jimmy Stewart had." One can only hope he takes another look at this far from negligible film in the future, because of both D.A. Miller's brilliant essay on it ("Anal Rope," in the anthology *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories/Gay Theories*) and Laurents' more than telling memoir, *Original Story By*.

Yet Waugh's impatience is perfectly understandable, bringing to mind Jean-Pierre Léaud's great off-screen monologue in Godard's *Masculine-Feminine* (1966): "This wasn't the film we dreamed of. This wasn't the total film that each of us has carried within himself . . . the film we wanted to make, or, more secretly, no doubt . . . that we wanted to live."

But how, precisely, would one go about living such a film? Waugh finds clues in the lives of his own countrymen—the famous animator Norman McLaren and the less famous, but no less worthy, and eclectic post-Godardian Claude Jutra. In his celebration of their careers, "Two Great Gay Filmmakers," Waugh makes a point of bringing up director Denys Arcand's review of Jutra's *A tout prendre* in the independent film journal *Parti Pris*, where the future director of the seemingly gay-friendly *Decline of the American Empire* asks how homosexuality can have "a special status of self-affirmation in view of our global context of existence in regard to artistic expression." Just a slightly more intellectualized version of the "special rights" America's Christian Coalition claims gays and lesbians are demanding.

But one shouldn't get the impression that Waugh's writing is entirely sober-sided. Far from it. He takes cheeky note (and it's high time someone did) of "the closety but blatant *Films and Filming*." And lest one feel that he sees films only to write about ideology, Waugh's *Maurice* review makes mention that "Rupert Graves has of course gone on to dreamboat heaven, at least in my books." Mine too.

Still and all, the real accomplishment of a book like *The Fruit Machine* is the way it bears witness to films few people saw, and may never see again—despite the seeming plenitude of the home video age. *Silverlake Life: The View from Here*, the best film ever made about AIDS, is widely available, but the same can't be said of its predecessor, *Blackstar: Autobiography of a Close Friend*. And where and when will it be possible to see *Blue Jeans, Born a Man . . . Let Me Die a Woman, I'm Not from Here, Race D'Ep, Johan, Tous les garçons,* and *Nagua*—to name just a few of the works Waugh writes of movingly. Perhaps they'll only continue to exist in his writing.

There are worse fates, of course. And Waugh deals with a cataclysmic one in "Archeology and Censorship"—an exhaustive recounting of the troubles he faced in publishing *Hard to Imagine*—his study of Kinsey's study of the homoerotic imagination. If it wasn't publishers chary of dealing with the "hot button issue" in a post-Mapplethorpe-vs.-Jesse-Helms culture, it was the Kinsey Institute itself—leading to a series of compromises on the imagery used in the book that has left Waugh not so much sadder but wiser as sharper and angrier. For the crux of the issue is gay history and its teaching. What are we to know and how are we to know it? Over and over, Waugh finds that its teachers are Queer Cinema's chief protagonists. Consider *Nighthawks,* or *Taxi zum Klo*, or John Greyson's *Zero Patience*, with its elementary school students singing about empiricism in a cheerily grave production number. For like Greyson, Waugh knows that teaching is the key—especially now that s/he who was in the past "spoken," speaks. Anita Bryant's campaign to rid the U.S. of gay teachers, frequently referred to by Waugh, was eclipsed by AIDS. But the struggle it contained continues. In fact, this book embodies it. Who is brave enough to teach *The Fruit Machine*?

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Identity and Memory

The Films of Chantal Akerman

Edited by Gwendolyn Audrey Foster. Trowbridge, U.K.: Flicks Books, 1999.

Like Jacques Brel, who also performed a kind of poetic autobiography, Chantal Akerman is a Belgian poet whose artistic force blossomed in France. There, in a cinematic environment characterized by the New Wave's neo-Impressionistic concerns with presentation, surface, light, and marginality—as shown, say, in Truffaut's *La Peau*

douce (1964)—as well as by an airy sense of playfulness and resistance to cultural *données*—see, for instance (as she did), Godard's *Pierrot le fou* (1968)—she began to experiment with her own body and thought as an inscribing device and the screen itself as a sensitive plane, a film, that might retain traces of herself. *Pierrot*, in fact, had inspired her to think of herself as a filmmaker.

Evident in her earliest finished full-length work, *Je Tu Il Elle* (1974), and continuing onward, was a fond and curious, but also imprisoned, experience of static space, not so much as though she were trapped in a cell herself, as narrator or subject, but as though space and personality were for Akerman contiguous, even inseparable, essences. When, therefore, in Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's 1996 *Oxford History of World Cinema*, Catherine Fowler wrote that Akerman's cinema "is resolutely marginal, yet . . . should not be marginalized," she was touching upon not only particular and critical sensibilities in this filmmaker's work toward the narrative project, toward woman's contemporary role, toward conventions of viewer expectation in the Western cinema, but also upon that peculiar Gallic fascination for the margins of experience, indeed the ultimate margins of felt reality: the skin of the moment.

The project of estimating the relentlessness with which Akerman's work is marginalized, yet also building the strongest fortifications against marginalizing it, is very handily realized in Gwendolyn Audrey Foster's signally erudite and championing collection, *Identity and Memory: The Films of Chantal Akerman*. Here, along with a detailed filmography and bibliography, both compiled by Foster, we find ten varied and devoted explorations of Akerman's major films—virtually all of them, indeed, with the exception of *Un Divan à New York* (*A Couch in New York* [1996]), the single title that may be most familiar to popular filmgoers in North America and which is given only slight treatment at the conclusion of Ginette Vincendeau's otherwise revealing and passionate exploration of the twisting masterpiece, *Nuit et jour* (*Night and Day* [1991]). These essays are notably subtle in their scholarship, engagingly framed, and detailed in their focal concern, aptly balancing theoretical sharpness with a precise critical gaze at the films' structures, compositions, and narrative implications.

Because it gives so extensive a treatment of the major Akerman titles—*Je Tu Il Elle, Jeanne Dielman, News from Home, Portrait of a Young Girl at the End of the 1960s in Brussels, All Night Long, Night and Day, The Eighties,* and others—and because the essays, some psychoanalytic and some postmodernist, are written with a clear view of contemporary feminist theory as it applies to cinema, this book is admirable and appealing as an introduction not only to Akerman but also to contemporary film. That each essay focuses on only one or a very small number of films allows the contributors (Jennifer M. Barker, Janet Bergstrom, Kristine Butler, Catherine Fowler, Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, Ivone Margulies, Judith Mayne, Maureen Turim, Ginette Vincendeau, and Foster herself) to navigate over Akerman's complex surfaces much as Akerman herself does upon the world of her often self-reflective characters. It also allows for exceptionally fascinating engagements with the reader.

Writing about an early Akerman film, *News from Home* (1976), in a meditation based on Michel de Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life*, Jennifer Barker describes the filmmaker's New York as "a landscape of subway tunnels, of alleys, of the hidden places of the city, places just outside the margins of visibility and legibility" (42). Later in the book, writing of *Nuit et jour*, Vincendeau has occasion to remark that "the film affords a recognition of 'Paris' as a generic category . . . but also elicits a sense of ordinariness: you would have to be familiar with Paris to recognise the locations" (126). Both authors, and many others in the book as well, thus raise legibility *as* visibility and invoke the datum of a viewer's experience prior to commiting the act of reading the film. By addressing both Akerman's fascination with locale and her meticulous selection of scene—literally (and thus, the literalness of) her mise-en-scène—they challenge readers of the book to imagine or recollect themselves as readers of the films and also as readers of urban topography.

That our knowledge should so forcefully constrain our experience is a central theme of contemporary theorizing and contemporary art, of course, celebrated as much in popular criticism as it is in philosophical film. But in this book, one senses a specially charged, even overwhelming, sympathy between the strains of Akerman's filmmaking and the authors' attempts to come to terms with her theoretically, as though the critiques are visions of the filmmaker's vision as critique. The shaping and binding social organization invoked throughout *Identity and Memory* is the Word, ultimately the orthograph, unsusceptible to enlightenment because utterly anti-ocularcentric. Indeed, the place in Akerman's work of what Martin Jay calls "ocularcentrism" is addressed directly by Foster herself, in a brilliant analysis of the body as performatively constructed in *The Eighties* (1983), where she notes the importance of mis-Foleyed sounds for which "there is no corresponding image" (139). The ocularcentric regime is characterized as one in which spectators, captivated by visions, are incapable of discriminating between "real" images and reproductions—a domain of simulacra. But of course, anti-ocularcentrism privileges text in a particular way. Late in *Nuit et jour*, Julie, a young woman who has been loving two men, is told by her husband, "Tu parle comme un livre. (You talk like a book.)" She responds, "C'est parce que j'habite des livres. (That's because I live in literature.)" Akerman is thus careful to show us Julie's action conditioned by her habitation; but also, and perhaps less intentionally, the fact that Julie inhabits a wordy domain, not a visual one, recalling a certain sensibility to be found often in Truffaut. Around her in this gorgeous film, nocturnal Paris silently, but also impotently, spreads itself before the viewer's eye.

Discussing *Les Rendez-vous d'Anna* (*Meetings with Anna* [1978]) in a piece called "Invented Memories," Janet Bergstrom notes that "keeping a distance" is a "key element" of Akerman's cinema (99). This brilliant essay raises for me a key question about brilliant essays, especially in the face

of a filmmaking so desperate to become visual while remaining incapable of freeing itself from text as is Akerman's. The "distance" that is maintained by the meticulously framing camera under Akerman's direction is analagous to, if not identical with, the critical distance—a distance thrilled and provoked by a sense of itself, and by a corresponding sense of the world as obscure and away. Just as Akerman finds her characters (often herself) so mysterious as to be impenetrable, and in this reflects the conundrum of the contemporary artist, so the writers in *Identity and Memory*, eager, even desperate, to celebrate her, seem forced, most deliciously, to wrestle with and offer caresses to her surface. The essays ultimately share the eroticism of the films, and also their precision. On every page here, as in every scene of Akerman, one has the disturbing yet encouraging sense that the delineations are too fine, and yet also, at the same time, universal and exactly adequate. A body of such articles about such films, this book, then, is itself an oeuvre—an oeuvre reflecting an oeuvre—and Foster's care in choosing the authors in such a way as to maximize their affiancement to the films they write about is masterly.

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Movie-Struck Girls

Women and Motion Picture Culture After the Nickelodeon

By Shelley Stamp. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000. $22.95.

The decade of the 1910s witnessed a huge transformation in the movie industry, including shifts from nickelodeons to movie palaces, from a predominantly working-class audience to an expansion which included more middle-class viewers, from two-reelers to features, and from a waning cinema of attractions to the conventions of classical Hollywood cinema. Shelley Stamp's *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Picture Culture After the Nickelodeon* offers an interesting new look at one dimension of this vital transitional period.

Stamp is, above all, interested in exploring the relationship between the growing female audience during the period and a variety of films in which women played prominent roles. She notes, as have other film historians, that the industry sought to broaden its audience in part by making higher quality or more "uplifting" films, hoping that such films would make movies more respectable by enticing more women to attend movies. The book's central argument relates to this phenomenon. As Stamp puts it, "Even though women's films and filmgoing were so often associated with cinema's growing cultural legitimacy in the transitional era . . . women's patronage was also built with subject matter like sexuality, action-adventure stories, and feminist agitation not normally associated with ladylike gentility" (9).

This list of three elements—sexuality, action-adventure stories, and feminist agitation—hints at the book's structure. After opening with a well-researched chapter on patterns in women's moviegoing in the 1910s, Stamp has chapters on the cycle of "white slave" films released in the early 1910s, on popular movie serials with female heroines, and on films dealing with the struggle for women's suffrage. The chapter on the white slave films gives an outstanding sketch of the white slave traffic controversy in the early 1910s (between 1910 and 1914 no fewer than 43 municipalities conducted inquiries into the alleged practice of capturing unsuspecting young women for prostitution, and the movies found it an attractive topic). Stamp also gives a perceptive discussion of three films which drew on that controversy in their narratives: *Traffic in Souls* (1913), *The Inside of the White Slave Traffic* (1913), and *Little Lost Sister* (1917). She also points out the irony that "although the white slave films harbored deep anxieties about women's growing participation in urban leisure culture, they succeeded in attracting scores of female patrons who gathered in movie theaters thought to be the very sites where they could find themselves prey to slave traffickers and procurers" (94).

Adventure serials with female protagonists, like *The Exploits of Elaine* or *The Perils of Pauline*, were, according to Stamp, "the industry's first sustained, deliberate attempt to cultivate (and cater to) female patronage on a national scale" (102). This chapter contains evidence of the popularity of these serials, an interesting discussion of the different ways the films were exhibited (and the relationship between the films and versions published in periodicals), and a discussion of the circular plot structure of the serials. In the conventional trajectory, heroines were freed from family ties and relationships to begin their adventures, only to return, usually to marriage, by the end. Stamp also documents the importance of these serial queens in the growth of fan culture in the 1910s, noting that fan magazine stories about the actresses often resisted the opposition of strength and femininity that the film's plot lines usually reinforced.

Finally, the book explores a variety of films about women's suffrage released in the 1910s—both anti-suffrage comedies and pro-suffrage features—as well as the relationship of those films to the larger suffrage movement and to female audiences. The pro-suffrage features were part of the larger movement of social problem films in the decade that Kevin Brownlow has documented in *Behind the Mask of Innocence*. Although the aesthetic of entertainment that came to dominate the American cinema in the 1920s discouraged such message films, a surprising number were produced in the 1910s. And as Stamp suggests, the "pointed suffrage dramas invited audiences to carry lessons from the screen into the practice of their daily lives" (155), transporting viewers into the more threatening area of politics.

Movie-Struck Girls has a number of strengths. The discussion of the white slave controversy and the films it spawned is the best I've read. Stamp is evidently a patient and tenacious archival researcher; in addition, she not only shows solid familiarity with current scholarly work in film

history and American cultural history of the period, but she also positions her work clearly in relation to it, skilfully blending textual and contextual analysis.

I'd also mention three reservations. On rare occasions the book seemed to stray from its focus, as in an interesting but not obviously related discussion of the various ways that exhibitors circulated the serials. Second, Stamp argues but never convincingly demonstrates that the serials abandoned "the closed textual model of classical cinema" (125). Of course, the ending of each episode had to leave some narrative strands open, but one could probably find many of the classical principles of narrative coherence at work in the individual episodes, and Stamp also indicates how the serials contained closed endings in which the heroine is married, hardly a deviation from classical norms. Finally—and this may just be a problem of any film history that considers reception—it's simply hard to demonstrate how many women actually saw the films under consideration and just what the women who saw the white slave films, the serials, and the pro-suffrage films thought about them. One can quote from reviews (as Stamp does convincingly to show that many reviewers, mostly male, tried to downplay the political messages of the pro-suffrage films), but it's much harder to demonstrate just what female desires were satisfied by the films.

Overall, though, this is a welcome addition to the growing body of research on this crucial period in American film history. When scholars discuss this period in the future, the image of the "movie-struck girl" should be a part of the conversation.

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Mythologies of Violence in Postmodern Media

Edited by Christopher Sharrett. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1999. $49.95 cloth; 24.95 paper.

Over the last two decades, and especially during the 1990s, writers on film have reoriented the critical frameworks and revised the categories by which cinema generally and film violence specifically can be interrogated and understood. The richness of much of this writing derives from a willingness to reexamine, question, and subvert longstanding assumptions underlying conventional accounts of film violence; concerns ranging from otherness and sacrifice to censorship, cultural specificity, and conceptions of violence itself have thus been reconsidered. Collectively, the variety and quality of recent critical efforts have constituted a second golden age, after that of the late 60s and early 70s, of film-violence scholarship. During that period, of course, Hollywood paralleled the counterculture's challenges to traditional social standards and values by creating scenes of increasing violence that culminated in three films that are emblematic for many of the era's imagining of individual and social violence: *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *The Wild Bunch* (1969), and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). While other films are sometimes added, with *Psycho* (1960) and *Taxi Driver* (1976) adduced most frequently as beginning and end point, it is the central trilogy that carries most of the cultural freight for the period. These works are central to our cultural imagination of violence, and merit continued study as precursors to the productions of our own time. A persistent question facing critics today is the extent to which contemporary cinematic bloodletting and that of earlier productions can be seen as continuous or discontinuous.

For some, like Christopher Sharrett, the achievement of filmmakers three decades ago was to subvert classical forms and demythologize popular cinema so that, increasingly in today's media productions, traditional modes of structuring and comprehending brutish action no longer hold sway. In a 1993 anthology, *Crisis Cinema: The Apocalyptic Idea in Postmodern Narrative Film*, Sharrett posited an "apocalyptic idea" running through contemporary Hollywood cinema that articulated how a radical shift from the past, especially the late 60s and early 70s, had occurred. His new collection, *Mythologies of Violence in Postmodern Media*, engages this question more directly.

As the title indicates, Sharrett's avowed position is that of a critic of postmodern culture. Unmistakeable in his writing is the implication of profound exhaustion, disaffection, apocalypse, and crisis in his characterization of contemporary culture that marks it as separate and distinct from that of the 60s and 70s. In cinema, this refers to contemporary films that employ intertextual references and pastiche, appropriate styles and references freely from film and media history, and produce historically "depthless" movies whose simulation of and nostalgia for the past are based in existing representations rather than any attempt to recreate a "real" past. They signal the collapse of traditional cultural or aesthetic hierarchies and the concomitant exhaustion of given cinematic forms or modes of production. Sharrett thus writes in his introduction about the altered significance of ritual sacrifice in film culture and society more generally: "It seems to me that while scapegoating and the continued persecution of the Other, ideas important to the work of Slotkin and Girard, are still paramount in the reunification of a disintegrating social order, such notions have been sufficiently exposed in public discourse as to render them steadily useless as myths reuniting a civilization, yet they are played out, rather desperately, for their own sake" (18).

"Gore Culture," Part One of Sharrett's volume, features essays that effectively describe such a contemporary culture of simulated experience, media suffusion, and symbolic commodification and consumption. It is a culture personified by the depoliticized and hyperpsychologized serial killer whose actions, Martin Rubin's piece points out, challenge not the consensus or mainstream social order but the killer's exclusion from it. Perhaps most original here is Philip Simpson's excellent essay on cinematic serial murderers. Following a lucid explication of postmodern and apocalyptic culture, he advances a compelling critique of the conservative politics predominating in films like *Natural Born Killers, Kalifornia,* and *Seven*. Together with the other contributors, Simpson persuasively describes the failure of traditional

discourses of violence and social cohesion as well as the encroachment of media on the boundaries of individual and collective identities.

Part Two, "Gender Violence and Male Madness," raises still more directly the issue of historical continuity by questioning the evolution of recent contests over masculinity. From the crisis of American masculinity wrought by Vietnam in the 60s and 70s through the re-masculinization of the Reaganite 80s into the softening and synthesizing of the 90s, these essays nicely trace the critique of traditional gender paradigms—as well as gender-based violent behaviors—in recent cinema. Not surprisingly, nostalgia is a guiding, and often violence-provoking, discourse in these accounts. Mark Gallagher's well-rounded and historicized contribution on the action film accordingly acknowledges the tension between the traditional narrative structures of melodrama and the disruptive, anxiety-driven spectacles of excess masculinity in the Rambo films, *True Lies*, and other blockbusters.

Part Three, "The Image as Policeman and the Violence of Vision," contains only three essays and claims, but fails, to substantiate the significance of vision and images in the contemporary representation of violence. This is especially regrettable following the earlier essays that define contemporary culture largely through links between image-based media and social violence. As its title, "Otherness, Aliens, and Trauma on the Transnational Scene," suggests, Part Four reads as a catch-all for topics ranging from "X-Files" and John Woo to *The Piano*. While the essays in both these sections are more uneven than those earlier in the volume, some are especially strong, including previously published but hard-to-find pieces by Ken Morrison ("The Technology of Homicide") and Tony Williams (on John Woo). Yet these later contributions also seem to lack both the coherence of the first two parts and a willingness to take full measure of their ostensible subject further—that is, to probe the putative violence across media, including other, more incontestably postmodern ones like cybermedia.

The afterword to *Mythologies of Violence in Postmodern Media* is a sophisticated theoretical entry, "Sacrificial Violence and Postmodern Ideology," in which Sharrett attempts to resituate sacrifice as a mode of defining and explaining violence in popular culture. Revisiting René Girard's theories, he questions the appropriateness of the structural process of ritual sacrifice to contemporary models of identity and culture. The issue Sharrett poses by rethinking Girard's work is not whether contemporary culture continues to feature sacrifice and scapegoating. Clearly, the straightforward structural employment of these forms and processes seems insistent and undeniable. The issue, rather, is whether ubiquitous media representations of bloodletting remain connected to shared myths that still shape and define the society and the viewer's place in it, or whether the myths have been destroyed, individuals diminished, and the society depoliticized, leaving popular narratives of sacrifice empty and defined only by their value as commodities.

Potentially more applicable to contemporary society, for Sharrett, is Bataille's notion of sacrifice as transgression, a way of introducing disequilibrium into a society of consumption. Sacrifice for Bataille is a disruptive release of excess or irrationality in an ordered economy. In such a society, where conventional mythic sacrifice can no longer generate consensus or have shared meaning, bloody acts involving the body still retain some brief ability to transgress the utilitarian role assumed by the individual and to introduce heterogeneity into social life. Even more, hearkening back to the essays of parts One and Two, Bataille's notion of sacrifice illuminates contemporary culture's emphasis on the body, on trauma, and on the productive potential of transgression.

Bataille is important to Sharrett because, without the critical lens he offers, violence in postmodern cinema loses depth or the meaning accrued through traditional relations to the real world. Even the most graphic instance of filmic violence potentially becomes like any other image, homogenized and emptied of meaning or seeming originality. National myths or cultural codes of representation are eroded and other substantive meanings largely evacuated, leaving only the images themselves. For, indeed, as films have become largely self-referential commodities, the concern is that they are increasingly intended for the spectator's consumption, regardless of "content." Attempts to critique this process, like Oliver Stone's excessive use of media pastiche in *Natural Born Killers* or Errol Morris's elevation of formal "documentary" qualities as subject for inquiry in *The Thin Blue Line*, largely fail, as these texts, also, are emptied of meaning by the very forms they employ. More routine examples of violence in contemporary action films merely rework and recirculate self-consciously spectacular images that affirm, in their familiarity, the conservative status quo.

Where many critics—and, indeed, several of Sharrett's contributors—disagree is how far these claims of postmodern culture extend, and how thoroughly they can be applied to the diversity of today's filmmaking practices and the range of often contestatory and ambivalent contemporary film violence. The embrace or skepticism of these claims will likewise finally determine most readers' responses to *Mythologies of Violence in Postmodern Media*. For all those interested in a serious and wide-ranging critical discussion of violence in contemporary film, however, it is an invaluable collection.

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Overhearing Film Dialogue

By Sarah Kozloff. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000. $45.00 cloth; $15.95 paper.

Sarah Kozloff's sharp, incisive book reminds us of how essential dialogue is to the aesthetics and experience of cinema. How remarkable it is that this point should need making, yet generations of film theory and practice—from Pudovkin, Eisenstein, and Arnheim to John Ford and Alfred

Hitchcock—have slighted the spoken word in favor of the image. Hitchcock was fond of "pure cinema" (wordless sequences stressing framing, editing, music, and ambient sound), and yet, as Kozloff shows in an extended analysis of the party scene in *Notorious*, it was the dialogue surrounding Hitchcock's exquisite camerawork and cutting that infused these with meaning.

Kozloff ties the bias against dialogue in much film theory and scholarship to an anxiety that words will compromise the independence of cinema as an art by conjoining it with theater or literature. She also relates it to a cultural association of talkativeness with femininity and of action with masculinity and a consequent bias in favor of the latter. While this is an intriguing notion, it fails to account for the popularity of such talky, dialogue-centered filmmakers as Quentin Tarantino and Kevin Smith. More likely, it is the association of words with emotion and sentiment—which Kozloff analyzes in a perceptive discussion of melodrama—that is suspect in gendered terms, a suspicion which the term "chick flicks" clearly demonstrates.

Kozloff positions her work as a needed corrective to the image-centeredness of film studies, and she points out that film viewers are *eavesdroppers* as well as voyeurs, listeners as well as viewers. In the first section of the book, she explains the general characteristics of filmic speech—explaining narrative causality, revealing character, anchoring situation and action, eliciting viewer emotion, providing opportunities for stars with verbal abilities to shine—and concludes this section with a preliminary effort to explore the structural connections of dialogue with performance, shot content and scale, editing, and sound design. A viewer's impression of a film's visual design, she maintains, is influenced by the meanings conveyed via filmic speech. "I wonder if most of our knowledge about visual choices hasn't subconsciously taken dialogue into consideration all along: when we see a character with a shadow dramatically bifurcating his or her face, do we read *tortured spirit* from the visuals alone, or did we learn about the character's self-division from surrounding dialogue?"

As a part of this discussion, she offers a valuable corrective to the bias against synchronous sound embedded in traditional (Eisenstein, Pudovkin) and contemporary (Michel Chion, Rick Altman, Kaja Silverman) theory, where synch is thought to hide the "apparatus" and further the illusion of transparency and the ideological blinkering of the audience that it allegedly fosters. Kozloff identifies several reasons to explain the dominance of synch speech in commercial cinema: a biologically based perceptual interest in matching sound and visual elements innate in humans; the polyvalence of words (which requires that they be scrutinized contextually to ascertain their meaning); and a cultural privileging of face-to-face encounters for conversations deemed important.

And another reason beckons: "Watching characters while they talk [is] endlessly enriching because it allows viewers to study and compare so many simultaneous signifiers: the actors' words, their voices, their intonations; their facial expressions, the look in their eyes, their body posture, their gestures, their costuming. . . ." Which is to say, quite rightly, I believe, and contra Hitchcock, that one of the deepest pleasures the movies give us is providing pictures (and the sound) of people talking.

The second part of the book is an absorbing discussion of how filmic speech varies by genre and a detailed explication of the structural features of dialogue in Westerns, screwball comedies, gangster films, and melodrama. Kozloff is a very good genre critic, sensitive to nuance and the ways these genres have changed over time, and she is readily familiar with the voluminous literature on these genres. Each of the genre sections concludes with a close analysis of dialogue patterning in pairs of films: *Stagecoach* and *The Magnificent Seven*; *Bringing Up Baby* and *The Palm Beach Story*; *The Godfather* and *Reservoir Dogs*; and *Now, Voyager* and *Terms of Endearment*.

Kozloff notes the truism that the Western hero must be taciturn, and then points out that this is a *style* of speech—abrupt, condensed, and powerful—and that the genre actually values words, or, more precisely, a man's word, above all else. "As soon as one buys into the claim that the Western devalues language, a major paradox appears: of all American film genres, it is the Western that repeatedly, insistently stresses the sanctity of words, the importance of verbal promises." These are the index of moral integrity.

By contrast with the clarity of the dialogue in Westerns, speech in screwball comedies tends to be oblique, fraught with implication and layer, irony and inference. Kozloff examines the verbal dexterity of screwball characters and their tendency (especially the heroines) toward "blathering," a verbal unruliness in which they dominate conversation with vague vocabulary and freewheeling associations that shut other speakers out. Her analysis of speech patterns in gangster movies is especially good, showing how speech distinguishes these characters from those of film noir, a genre that frequently overlaps with this one. She points to a connection between the gangsters' verbal explosiveness—the tendency to speak in short, choppy, repetitious, and rude phrasings—and their penchant for physical violence. The connection is startlingly apparent in the familiar public-speech-turned-violent scene, wherein the gangster begins speaking in a calm, restrained manner only to become rabid with fury and lash out in an amazingly brutal assault on an underling. Often such a character may be suspected of informing, a blasphemous act in this genre. With respect to informing (and not unlike the valuing of speech in Westerns), "the gravest jeopardy portrayed in gangster films is thus not physical violence but a speech act."

Discussing melodrama, Kozloff points out that scholarly work on this genre has tended to focus on against-the-grain readings that explore the social, gender, or class contradictions of such films. Such interpretations, she maintains, sabotage the way dialogue works in melodrama as a language of love, revealing feelings in a heightened, but straightforward, sometimes overblown style that is not intended to be campy or ironic. It is accompanied by a performance style that "embodies" feelings with grand gestures. Like the others, this genre has its own paradox—melodramas hinge on secrets, on that which cannot be spoken. Kozloff be-

lieves this struggle between expression and repression constitutes the core of melodramatic speech.

Throughout the book, Kozloff quotes a lot of dialogue and cites many filmic examples. While her breadth of example is impressive, it is disappointing to catch her in some errors. The reverberant line in *The Conversation* is "He'd kill us if he got the chance" (not "if he had the chance"), and that famous one from *Cool Hand Luke* is "What we have here is failure to communicate" (not "a failure"). (In the latter case, it's the way actor Strother Martin inserts a pause before 'failure' in place of the 'a' that gives the line reading its weight and resonance.) But in the end, Kozloff's book reminds us of what we already really knew (or should have known): that cinema is not a predominantly visual medium, that imagery alone impoverishes it, and that dialogue is not just a critical element but is constitutive of so much of what we think the visual to be. *Overhearing Film Dialogue* deserves to be widely read and to have a significant influence on future theory building.

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Pre-Code Hollywood

Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930-1934

By Thomas Doherty. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. $49.50 cloth; $19.50 paper.

Over the course of the past 15 years, our conception of what constitutes film history has broadened, historical methods have become more sophisticated, and our understanding of American film history has developed both depth and nuance. Among the major contributions to the field have been studies of the classical Hollywood cinema, histories of the once disparaged studio system, accounts of the operations of the Production Code Administration and the Legion of Decency, and explorations of forgotten or overlooked genres. Thomas Doherty's *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930-1934* benefits from all of this work, but it also makes a unique contribution by combining the questions and concerns in many of the above-mentioned works into a unified package. Doherty has produced a vivid snapshot of the United States and the motion picture industry in what was arguably the most convulsive period the country faced in the twentieth century. And like the best snapshots, there is something amicable, approachable, and essentially honest about *Pre-Code Hollywood*.

Doherty's book is ostensibly a history of the unconventional films Hollywood made between the adoption of the Code in 1930 and the enforcement of the Code by Joseph Breen and the Production Code Administration in 1934. The four-year period marked an odd, aberrant interval in the studio era in which boundaries were constantly tested by filmmakers attempting to grapple with the new sound technology and declining box-office revenues, and prickly audiences were often vocal about both film content and their own uncertain fate. Doherty opens the book with a chapter on the Code, making a swift but compelling case—contra Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson—that the classical Hollywood cinema really began in 1930, when the studios announced the end of silent film production. But more to the point, and to the core of his argument, he suggests that the classical Hollywood cinema went beyond a particular style and industrial practice to include a specific moral system as well. The pre-Code period was something of an extended negotiation over what the contours of that moral system would look like.

Doherty suggests that the Code, "the enabling legislation of the classical Hollywood cinema," was not merely a "grunted jeremiad from bluenose fussbudgets," but was born out of progressive reformist impulses that "sought to uplift the lower orders" (6). It was also a political document intended to bottle up agitation for government regulation of the movies that came from several quarters as the new decade began. If the Code eventually became a sophisticated system for "patrolling the diegesis," and for Code censors to extend their surveillance "beyond the visible world and into the space of the spectator's mind" (11), in its initial years it was something to be evaded, challenged, or simply ignored in the face of the crisis brought about by the Depression. The tensions and negotiations between the studios, the Hays Office and state censors, as well as exhibitors and audiences, form the drama documented in *Pre-Code Hollywood*. What Doherty demonstrates is that at a time of social unrest that constantly threatened to collapse into social upheaval, the cultural accord implicit in the Code simply could not be implemented. Cynicism, class antagonisms, and fear trumped the assumptions of shared principles and beliefs that undergirded the Code.

The second chapter of *Pre-Code Hollywood*, "Breadlines and Box Office Lines," establishes the social and industrial context in which the pre-Code motion pictures were initially made and seen. All of the subsequent chapters also benefit from solid contextualization that reintroduces the reader to the range of interpretations that originally greeted these films.

After the first two chapters, the book is essentially organized by genre: preachment yarns, vice films, crime flicks, and horror movies, among others. In his conclusion Doherty writes, "Undeniably, the search for history in film tends to be more exciting when the territory has yet to be mined for cultural meaning. The world of pre-Code Hollywood is no virgin landscape, but it remains relatively uncharted and open to exploration, best so when the inhabitants are understood on their own terms" (346). It's true that the world of pre-Code Hollywood is hardly pristine territory. Some of the films discussed have been the subject of numerous articles and book-length excursions. All of the usual suspects are trotted out here: *Scarface* and *Little Caesar*, Mae West and the Marx Brothers, *Baby Face* and *Blonde Venus*. But Doherty does approach them "on their own terms"—or in their original context—with fresh results. And for every *King Kong* or *Tarzan*, the author spends time with movies that have received less thorough critical mastication, such as *Cabin in the Cotton*, *Hell's*

Highway, and *Massacre*. Oddities such as RKO's dismal effort to bring *Amos 'n' Andy* to the screen in *Check and Double Check*, and Cecil B. DeMille's foray into high-school vigilantism, *This Day and Age*, are pulled from relative obscurity and given thoughtful interpretation.

If Doherty is willing to set his sights beyond the canonical horizon with feature-length narratives, the real revelations in *Pre-Code Hollywood* often come from his divergence from that form. Too often discussions of the studio era focus strictly on features, but Doherty draws on documentaries and expeditionary films, newsreels, and cartoons to flesh out his picture of the period. For instance, the chapter "Dictators and Democrats" contains analyses of some of the well-remembered politically charged dramas of the day, including *Gabriel over the White House* and *Wild Boys of the Road*. Yet the chapter opens by recalling the political allegory that resonated with audiences in Disney's 1933 short *The Three Little Pigs*, a film that had greater drawing power than the features it often supported. Other movies discussed in the chapter include the documentary compilation *Mussolini Speaks*, newsreel coverage of Franklin Roosevelt, shorts produced to bolster support for the New Deal, and the early anti-Nazi docudrama *Hitler's Reign of Terror*. *The Mad Dog of Europe*, an anti-Nazi project that never even made it before the cameras, serves as an interesting case study of Hays Office efforts to smooth over controversy and manufacture the illusion of consensus. Newsreels and expeditionary films are given revealing chapters of their own and help contribute to *Pre-Code Hollywood*'s comprehensiveness and depth.

Some of that depth comes from the way Doherty approaches the films he considers. Rather than simply mining the trades and the *New York Times* for critical response, he makes the effort to dig into often ignored arenas. Film coverage from the *New Masses* provides views from American's extreme left, while commentary from *The Crisis* and the *Pittsburgh Courier* reveal the concerns of African-American critics. Doherty also digs through the back pages of the trades for exhibitor comments and reports of audience reactions. Accounts of unruly audiences razzing Prohibition's defenders or repulsed by newsreel shots of murdered children provide the kind of specifics that readers are often left wanting in film history. In fact, the range of individuals and constituencies given voice in *Pre-Code Hollywood* is perhaps as diverse as we can ever hope for in any history of the classical Hollywood cinema.

If the comprehensiveness and depth of coverage were not enough to recommend this book, the fact that Doherty ranks as one of the more skilled writers currently working in film studies would be. He combines solid scholarship with sharp, efficient prose that is accessible and often artful—something that makes him a rare commodity. Of course, any book that takes the Depression as its backdrop—the headlines, the lynchings, the riots, the growing pall over Europe—runs the risk of lapsing into a narrative funk. But without losing sight of the seriousness of the conflicts and controversies of the age, Doherty infuses the book with buoyancy that only begins to flag toward the end. (The last genre covered is the "nightmare picture" or horror film, and the familiarity that most readers have with Dracula, Frankenstein, and their brethren makes it a bit anti-climactic in the wake of the lecherous businessmen, jaded journalists, and intrepid adventurers of the earlier chapters.) The book is laced with vivid metaphors that often recall the language of the early 30s, but in an unself-conscious way. It's also filled with wry humor, in the form of tart asides, pointed lines of movie dialogue inserted into the text for emphasis, and through ironic juxtaposition of plot synopsis with a critical reaction or advertising tag line. *Pre-Code Hollywood* is an energizing read, made all the more so because Doherty isn't afraid to lob the occasional grenade at the film studies field. For instance, he points up truths that many academics will find painful, such as the fact that "silent cinema has little presence on the cultural radar screen, its landmark films unrented on video, its iconic images spotted only as fodder for video collage on MTV" (5).

The only real drawbacks to *Pre-Code Hollywood* are the lack of a bibliography and an odd citation style. The elimination of numbered endnotes in favor of a system of key words or phrases may be a concession to the general readership that the book wants to, and deservedly will, attain. One can certainly breeze through the pages without being held up by those pesky little superscript numbers. But the very richness of the material necessarily sparks curiosity about sources, so the interested reader is forced to flip back and forth from the text to the final pages, playing word-matching games. That, however, is a minor complaint and will not stop *Pre-Code Hollywood* from taking a place among the best books produced on the studio era.

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Savage Theory

Cinema as Modern Magic

By Rachel O. Moore. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000. $49.95 cloth; $17.95 paper.

Savage Theory is a book of compelling erudition. In support of her contention that cinema functions as modernity's form of magical ritual, Rachel Moore demonstrates an impressive facility with the thought of several early theorists of film and a subtle understanding of theorists such as Eisenstein, Benjamin, Kracauer, Bazin, Balázs, and Lindsay. What is most refreshing about *Savage Theory*'s approach to these classical film theorists is that it engages them seriously as theorists. That is to say, rather than historicizing their claims in order to reveal their cultural situatedness or their historical limitations, the book delves into their insights in order to decipher common threads running through them and in order to point out what they got right. Moore addresses Eisenstein, Kracauer, et al. as if they were contemporary thinkers, as if their thought still had vitality today. This is, of course, an

atypical way of proceeding, and the result is that *Savage Theory* gives new life to the film theorists it encounters.

One of the book's main tasks is to show the crucial role that the "primitive" has played within film and film theory. The primitive spectator's response to film—taking mere cinematic projection for reality—supposedly attests to film's magic. When we laugh at this reaction and feel superior to it, according to Moore, we disavow our own primitive (or naïve) response to film, our own belief in the magic of cinema. We project our own primitivism onto the foreign Other so that we might disavow it in ourselves. But the primitive does not only function as a category for projection and disavowal; it also has a more positive role. And, according to Moore, it is the great achievement of the major classical film theorists to emphasize this role and productively link cinema to the primitive. Rather than simply projecting modern primitivism onto a foreign Other, these film theorists understand the primitivism of cinema itself. Cinema, for them, is a moment of the primitive within modernity, a fly in the ointment of the predominance of enlightenment. By pointing out the primitivism of the cinema, they are able to grasp the potential transformative power of cinema—its ability to precipitate social and political change.

By taking up the perspective of the early theorists of the cinema, we can see cinema's possibilities for radicality. This is especially apparent when we look at their conception of what defined cinema. Moore shows that even though the early film theorists formulated their ideas about the cinematic in quite different terms, a common ground runs throughout: cinema allows us to experience pre-logical language, language before it is hypostatized. For Bela Belázs, cinema is inherently gestural rather than verbal; for Walter Benjamin, cinema is both immediate and tactile; and for Sergei Eisenstein, cinema articulates "inner speech" rather than rational external language. Despite the differences among these conceptions, the cinematic in each case is defined as something prior to the fully mediated, closed world of language. The classical theorists see the experience of cinema as one that challenges the hegemony of reified society with an alternative mode of experience. Hence, cinema is able to call the reified world of bourgeois society into question in a way that other art forms cannot.

One reason that the classical theorists of the cinema are able to conceptualize film's potential as a vehicle for radical change is precisely because they recognize and stress the link between film and magic. Because of the triumph of modernity and technology over the forces of irrationality, magic is repressed within modern society. However, cinema marks the return of the repressed, the vehicle for magic within a rational and technological world. In fact, cinema, according to Moore, has the virtue of revealing the magical nature of technology itself: technology is nothing but a magical triumph over magic—another version of magic. By grounding her book in the thinking of the early theorists, Moore is able to uncover connections that were apparent at the birth of film and have since become obscured.

Just as the way that Moore engages the classical film theorists is the book's strength, it is also its weakness. At too many points, *Savage Theory* remains just a summary of the claims of classical theorists without a clear framework through which to view these claims. Rather than articulating and developing her thesis concerning the magical role that cinema occupies today, Moore tends to allow this idea to remain implicit. By describing in detail the claims of classical theorists, it seems that she hopes that an argument will develop organically from these descriptions. Unfortunately, this doesn't happen. Instead, the book merely suggests its most fascinating claims rather than fully exploring them. Because of this lack of exploration, one finishes the book feeling as though a great opportunity has been missed. The book's claims are sound, but they are not made with sufficient forcefulness or expansiveness.

We can see an example of this in Moore's account of the fundamental relationship between cinema and magic. Rather than exploring the theoretical (and specifically political) ramifications of this relationship, Moore is content to demonstrate the existence of the link between the theorization of film and magical ritual. In itself, this is a valuable connection to make. But Moore never goes beyond the mere connection in order to explain its significance, and this leaves several questions hanging in the air. How does understanding "cinema as modern magic" allow us to gain a better hold on the role of the cinema in society? What does this connection tell us about the political valence of cinema? To what extent is magic a necessary element within every social order? Why is cinema the repository of magic within contemporary Western society? To its credit, *Savage Theory* leads us to the brink of possible answers to these questions, but in the end, it remains content with hints and possibilities.

Savage Theory also, paradoxically, suffers from its strengths. Moore's thorough familiarity with all of the major classical film theorists allows her to dip into their arguments and cull from them their most important insights about the cinema. But this familiarity also seems to serve as a barrier to the development of her own argument. We never get a sense of what is important about the claims that are being advanced in the book—why we should consider seriously what we are being told. This is all the more disappointing because the book's claims *are* significant. If we understand the cinema as the modern manifestation of magic, then we can readily see the different ways that cinema functions politically. On the one hand, magic is the source of cinema's ability to fascinate and thereby serve as a vehicle for the ideological interpellation of spectators. But it is also the source of cinema's transcendence—its ability to point spectators beyond the social order in which they are situated. Despite its concern for cinema as the arena for magic, *Savage Theory* never considers the larger role of the cinema and its relationship to the social order as a whole. Important conclusions still need to be drawn. But even if it doesn't lead us far enough, Moore's book does not lead us astray.

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Screen Style

Fashion and Femininity in 1930s Hollywood

By Sarah Berry. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000. $25.95.

In Sarah Berry's lavishly illustrated study of the relationship between Hollywood fashion and women's identity in 1930s America, she laudably seeks a nuanced point of view about the social impact of the heyday of onscreen glamour. Berry's study is a valuable addition to feminist film studies for its knowledgeable, indeed encyclopedic, grasp of the films of the studio system era and for its refusal to speak reductively of Hollywood's extravagant emphasis on the style of its female stars.

Happily, the University of Minnesota Press has opted to serve the needs of Berry's project, despite the high cost of printing photographs. Her analysis of Hollywood fashion—divided into segments on consumerism and class, spectacle, exoticism, and the co-opting of menswear fashion for women—is intelligently accompanied by appropriate photographs that win half the battle for her argument. The way marketers used the glamour of the movies to push consumer buttons is dramatically depicted through full-page replicas of an ad from *Vogue* (1935) offering copies of Orry-Kelly's designs to the average woman and two from *Photoplay* (1929, 1934), one offering the Carl Company's reproductions of Hollywood designs and the other a Buick surrounded by numerous, seemingly identical, Busby Berkeley-like chorines. The same is true for the full-page reproductions of ads for Richard Hudnut cosmetics (1937), featuring Delores Del Rio, and for Lux soap (1935), featuring Bette Davis. The generous size of the illustrations does full justice to the power of those big, alluring images.

But if some of Berry's illustrations point to Hollywood's manipulation of women, others point in a different direction. Some of the images of the time are implicit revelations to an anxious female public of glamour as a constructed phenomenon; for example, the reproduction of the pages of an article which photographically document the process by which make-up artists transform Loretta Young into an "oriental beauty." Then there is the reproduction of a sign-of-the-times newspaper article and its accompanying photographs, called "The Strange Spectacle of Women in Trousers" (1933), that implicitly challenges the naturalization of social conventions about femininity. The book also contains a large number of well-chosen publicity shots of the glamour queens of the 30s and stills from their movies, the subtext of which is an unmistakable encouragement to women to be their own person by becoming the creators of their own style.

Berry's central point is that while she does not think that "consumer fashion in itself had a liberatory effect on women . . . it could represent women's ongoing struggle for visible autonomy in the social sphere." Berry makes that point early and often, beginning with a slyly zany anecdote about a father in Chicago who petitioned the court in 1908 for a restraining order against his teenaged daughter because she wanted to buy a nightgown, equating the purchase with the road to perdition: "She never wore a nightgown in her life . . . and neither did her parents. She's been associating with nifty people, that's the trouble with her. The first thing we know, she'll be buying an automobile." Aside from giving a new meaning to the word "nifty," this father testifies powerfully for the validity of making a connection between cultural icons of glamour and the release of female desire.

Berry conscientiously follows the winding trails that connect screen fashion to voyeurism, racism, and the ambiguities of gender identity. While always aware of existing commentary on the negative effects of the mass media relative to these issues, Berry notes complexities about the anxiety of Hollywood influence that have failed to receive adequate attention. In examining the connection between costumes and narrative, she plausibly discusses how extravagant Hollywood clothing was not only a merchandise tie-in (which it was), and an objectification of female sexuality (which it was), but also a disturbing element in mass media storytelling as well as a challenge to the pretense of realism in the popular culture movie. Further, in discussing the studios' patronizing use of white stars like Dorothy Lamour and Hedy Lamarr as exotic, primitive beauties, she notes that—despite their presentation as devouring divas, tragic victims, and demonized female desire—through the glamour of their images, "the dominance of white, monoracial beauty was significantly challenged by previously marginalized female identities." The same vogue brought to the screen the glamour of actors who *were* from other, previously marginalized non-European cultures, like Anna May Wong and Lupe Velez. If Lamour, Lamarr, Wong, and Velez played characters never accorded the respect they deserved, their vivid, charismatic styles nevertheless made them forces to be reckoned with, and sparked imitation among female consumers, who began to opt for deep (exotic) colors in their cosmetics and a new, free public display of their sexuality. Finally, Berry's exploration of the elements of cross-dressing in movie costuming, particularly in the 1940s, illuminates similar paradoxes. The strong onscreen women of the 40s who dressed in man-tailored suits, their shoulder pads and frilly blouses making them ambiguously both icons of power and objects of sexual display, inevitably got tied up in the prevalent narrative strategies that chastened their ambitions. However, Berry gives evidence that female spectators were freed (somewhat) to emulate male patterns of assertiveness when they imitated the male-inspired dress styles of Marlene Dietrich, Katharine Hepburn, and Joan Crawford, among others.

Readable, comprehensive, and clearly argued, Sarah Berry's study of fashion in 1930s films has the potential not only to expand on the theoretical dialogue about its subject but also to serve the general reader and the film student as an introduction to a substantial number of largely unknown films and stars who nevertheless make up an important part of Hollywood history. Never willing to fall into easy generalizations, her book consistently complicates our understanding of the technologies of female body decoration. The indeterminacy of female accoutrements is summed up in its depiction of what I would designate as "the paradox of the

nightgown." Beginning as it does with the consternation of the Chicago father about his daughter's nightwear as a sign of straying from the patriarchal fold, *Screen Style* ends with a statement by Rosalind Russell that suggests exactly the opposite: "I could order the clothes for my pictures in my sleep. I'd say . . . 'Make me a plaid suit, a striped suit, a grey flannel, and a negligee for the scene in the bedroom when I cry.'"

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The Second Century of Cinema

The Past and Future of the Moving Image

By Wheeler Winston Dixon. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2000. $17.95.

The title and subtitle of this book give some sense of its ambitions, and of course no 250-page volume is likely to live up to such sweeping intimations. What is on offer is a series of brief essays on a wide range of topics, grouped in five chapters, and given a measure of coherence by the recurring motif of the "margins" of filmmaking. Insofar as Dixon is concerned to ensure that the book holds together, he does so through arguing that the most interesting films emerge not from the Hollywood mainstream but from these margins.

His first chapter is called "Voices from the Margins, and the New Digital Cinema," and the yoking together of those two notions anticipates the book's dual concern with technological advance and with the creative impulses that will make use of them. He begins by attacking the "official" list-makers at the end of the twentieth century—the American and, to a lesser extent, the British film institutes—for their narrow recognition of what constitutes the most significant filmmaking of the preceding century, claiming that they "manage to marginalize both women film-makers and entire national cinemas." Arguing against the fatuity of erecting canons, he insists that "cinema history is writ largest at the margins" (4), and it is perhaps the most serious intention of the book to provide grounds for this view.

The most impressive aspect of the book is the sheer breadth of the author's scholarship as he pursues this aim: it entitles him, more than most, to write about what is happening in out-of-the-way production centers, and his musings and speculations take off from here. There is an astonishing range of exploration, comprehending, among others, new technologies (will digital filmmaking soon be the order of the day?), independent filmmakers in many countries, production at the racial and sexual margins, non-English-speaking cinemas, theatrical and cross-media performances, B movies, old British New Wave production, et al. Much of this material is so interesting that one wishes sometimes that Dixon would slow down a little and develop some of it in more detail.

For instance, the section on B movies opens up possibilities that cry out for extended treatment: the democratic way they enabled filmmakers to rise above the most austere budgets and schedules; the way in which, because of these strictures, they could "perpetually ride the wave of public taste" (79), giving the public "something they wanted, something that was not being supplied by the majors" (77), and giving it to them while it was still topical. It would be good to read Dixon at greater length on this matter, since he writes on it without descending into camp nostalgia. There are some tantalizing comments about the state of British filmmaking in the 1990s, used to bridge the gap between "The Second Wave of Hong Kong Cinema" and "An Interview with Bryan Forbes." Dixon notes that contemporary British cinema, sharing some of Hong Kong's problems in finding international audiences, "produces now for the most part either glossy romance films for export, or else highly personal local films that are not easily distributed abroad" (108). He draws attention to some of the lively new talents now filming in Britain, but he doesn't have the space here to develop an argument about why "most contemporary realist British films seem destined for local consumption, and fail to find a larger international audience" (109).

To describe the book's contents as essays is too limiting. As well as more traditional academic essays, such as the one on film versions of H.P. Lovecraft, there are survey accounts like the one outlining the main phases in New Zealand's filmmaking history; eclectically chosen interviews with the likes of Bryan Forbes, Jonathan Miller, Brian Clements, and Roger Corman; biographical notes on, for instance, Paul Robeson; and reviews (one section consists of reviews of *Fried Green Tomatoes* and *The Loved One*, linked only by their both being derived from novels). It is not common to find so disparate a collection of modes, but there is nothing wrong with that; in fact, the variety of modes is refreshing, and mirrors the eclecticism of the author's interests.

A weakness of the book, though, is that it doesn't prepare us for such heterogeneity and, as a result, one is apt to keep looking for the central arguments to reassert themselves. The fact that many of the pieces have appeared previously may help to account for the sometimes elusive connection underlying the sections of the book. For instance, the links between modern independent filmmaking and the biographical account of Paul Robeson's career are tenuous: Is Dixon suggesting that *all* his films are marginal because he is in them? That an African American, even one as gifted and charismatic as Robeson, *could not* be part of mainstream cinema? (And, while caviling, I'd add that such key terms as gothic and grotesque need spelling out; they are not necessarily self-evident, nor, in the same essay, is the notion of sincerity [65]).

However, there is a more-than-compensating generosity in regard to films and filmmakers. Dixon's sympathetic treatment of those who produce stimulating work at the margins, on low budgets, and in the face of distribution difficulties probably leads him to underestimate the achievements of what he calls the Dominant Cinema. However, any filmmaking country trying to establish an indigenous industry, let

alone anything so grand as a national cinema, any independent filmmaker equipped with something urgent to communicate and the skill to do so, will respond to the book's lament over the oppressive preeminence of the Hollywood cinema of spectacle. The art house needs its apologists more than ever now, and Dixon makes a real contribution in his support for the kinds of filmmaking that got swamped in the wake of *Titanic*. If this means that he is also less likely to notice the fine, thoughtful work that still somehow manages to emerge from the capital-heavy majors, it is still hard to quarrel with the liberality of his views, his willingness to cast his net widely, his sheer readability, and—not always a characteristic of film scholars—his sense of a wider culture of which film is only one, albeit fascinating, component.

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States of Emergency

Documentaries, Wars, Democracies

By Patricia R. Zimmermann. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000. $49.95 cloth; $19.95 paper.

A field guide to a political new wave in American documentary film and video, whose spectrum stretches from prochoice and HIV-prevention media collectives and the underground network of media activists collected in Craig Baldwin's film *Sonic Outlaws* (1995) to the intensely personal work of filmmakers like Rea Tajiri and Daniel Reeves, Patricia R. Zimmermann's *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars, Democracies* takes up the question of how documentary is to survive "as more than an antiquated relic of an idealized and pure radical practice that no longer exists in the new world order of transnational media, privatization, deregulation, and the closing down of political debate" (190). Zimmermann means to ground an investigation of documentary form in the analysis of the social and political contexts to which leftist documentarists of the past decade have responded. She establishes the function of new modes of documentary exposition for understanding a variety of new geo-political spaces, not just those created on the grand historical scale of the nation-state and its ruins. (The break-up of the old Communist world at the end of the 1980s, the "freeing" of trade by the GATT and NAFTA agreements, and the Bush declaration of a "New World Order" of American expansionism in the early 1990s form the historical backdrop of the analysis.)

Drawing on recent work in postcolonial and psychoanalytic theory, Zimmermann demonstrates the role of documentary film and video in explaining how the intimate spaces of identity are affected by the flow of people, information, and commodities through economic and diasporic channels. The works to which Zimmermann devotes most of her attention—independently produced films, videotapes, and multi-media projects with a feminist, queer, anti-racist, and/or anti-capitalist edge—serve as the vehicle for a set of speculations on the possibility of political agency in a media-saturated age. As Zimmermann remarks at the outset, "Even to imagine independent documentary in the 1990s and beyond requires thinking through how public institutions can be structurally organized to support work outside the market" (12).

Zimmermann is expansive in her coverage of American documentary film and video of the 1980s and 90s. She touches on the work of scores of mainstream and independent producers, from the most conventional network newsmagazine to politically radical and aesthetically adventurous works that cover a wide variety of social and political topics, from global trade to sexual identity. However, unlike a number of the critics following the path laid by Bill Nichols (in his 1991 book, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*), Zimmermann isn't particularly concerned to establish family resemblances between this recent work and earlier movements in social documentary. Instead, she concentrates on a kind of representation that stretches the principle of documentary—namely, an integrity that sets it apart from sheer entertainment—to its limit. The works that she favors incorporate fiction and reenactment, parody, images borrowed from other works, and numerous varieties of non-representational imaging technologies for which the indexical, photochemical relation between the viewer and the event—a condition central to the documentary ethic—are impossible.

In an environment as thoroughly privatized as the landscape of broadcasting Zimmermann describes in her opening pages, to even imagine a space of public discourse can be regarded as a belligerent act—a point she makes with the metaphorics of violence that lend the book its structure. *States of Emergency* is divided into two parts. The first, "Wars," comprises three chapters, each in some way concerned to place the past decade of American social documentary within the analytic frame of war. Specifically, the thesis of "Wars" is that with the end of the Cold War and the consequent domestication of military power (the "war" on drugs, the culture "wars"), committed filmmakers were forced to rethink the function and form of political documentary in significant ways. Moving back and forth between documentaries about experiences of war that have been relegated, either by time, trauma, or ideology, to the edges of consciousness (the experiences of Japanese Americans or Bosnian women in concentration camps; the Iraqi perspective on the Gulf War; or native perspectives on the U.S. presence in Latin America) and intra-national struggles that are *like* war (the struggles by minorities for civil rights or by artists for public funds), Zimmermann argues that the model of national documentary pioneered by John Grierson, which was developed to illustrate a nation working together, has been supplanted by one in which the nation does *not* "work," and in which national identity can only be fraught with suffering, guilt, and anxiety.

If the central theme of these first three chapters is that political and economic stresses have forced oppositional filmmakers to turn inward, the book's second part, "Ambushes," means to show how contemporary documentarists nonetheless create forms of community that supplant the national spaces projected by classic documentary. Contrasting the slick media strategy of the pro-life movement to a group of experimental and nonprofessional works of video concerned with reproductive politics, the fourth chapter argues that camcorder technologies and simple devices of critical media pedagogy were a more effective defense of reproductive rights than the equivocal response of the Clinton administration. The fifth chapter sets acts of media piracy against a brief history of the recent state-supported attempts by the media industry to shore up copyright in foreign markets. The works Zimmermann describes here and throughout the book suggest that, rather than a representation of experience that generates a "common sense" of ourselves as workers, women, Americans, and so on, a properly political form of documentary would be defined today by its ability to describe those domains of experience that make us what Julia Kristeva calls "strangers to ourselves": the emotional conditions of trauma and paranoia generated by war in all its forms, or the economic and technological conditions that weaken the integrity of intellectual property and the physical body. (However innovative their use of image technologies, these recent works are not the first to use experiments in form to explore new configurations of the extratextual relation between documentary and politics; one thinks, for instance, of the way that the discourse of fantasy underscores the tension between Marxism and feminism in Yvonne Rainer's *Journeys From Berlin/1971* [1979] or Jill Godmilow's *Far From Poland* [1984], films whose comparatively limited techno-aesthetic palette hardly inhibits their analysis of political contradictions.)

Given the exciting potential of this critical premise, it is a shame that *States of Emergency* never quite bears it out. The argument occasionally races ahead of the films and videos that have been selected to support it, as in Zimmermann's analysis of *Take Over: Heroes of the New American Depression* (Peter Kinoy and Pamela Yates [1991]). "*Take Over*," she writes, "not only exposes the inadequacy of states' policies but remedies the problem through joint direct action between the activists and the camera crews. In most scenes, the camera is side by side with the participants, breaking into buildings with them, marching in demonstrations, sitting around a table at an organizational meeting" (93). Such interactions, she suggests, are less "partisan filmmaking, arguing from the same side and fighting the same wars" than a kind of "media work that collapses the border between maker and subject as a false divide and depoliticized binary opposition" (95); the combined efforts of the homeless and their advocates "literally take over cinematic space, staking out their discursive ground as they problematize the very construct of 'giving voice'" (93). But since Zimmermann says little more about the parameters of "cinematic space" in *Take Over*, it is hard to see exactly how this work challenges the aesthetic of sympathy and spontaneity that prevails in conventional direct cinema. One wishes, therefore, that Zimmermann took a little more care in her use of the term public, which she uses constantly, but in a way that sometimes seems uninformed by the considerable body of critical work on the public sphere. She barely makes reference to Jürgen Habermas, the source of this critical concept; more significantly, the work of Alexander Kluge, who is both a Habermasian social theorist and a documentary filmmaker, and has written much about the topics of *States of Emergency*, is never mentioned. In a well-known interview, in fact, Kluge explains the vexed position of documentary filmmakers with regard to the public sphere by telling a story—about a confrontation with a group of squatters whose struggle against the state he wished to film—that makes a perfect counterpoint to Zimmermann's analysis of *Take Over*.

The final chapter on piracy as an oppositional act is particularly frustrating in this respect. Zimmermann presents a number of examples of an apparently flourishing pirate media subculture in order to establish that the "ecological modality" of digital culture places no premium on the originality or authenticity of the individual work (172). But her analysis of these works, which use various techniques of "culture jamming" to revise well-known and conventional images, is more or less limited to pointing out the devices of aesthetic and/or textual manipulation their makers employ in creating an openly gay Rock Hudson, a Barbie doll who speaks with the voice of G.I. Joe, an *Independence Day* in which sombreros visit the White House, and other acts of *détournement*. That is to say, her interpretation of these works approaches them as individual objects whose meaning can be explained by a conventional reading of their contents.

Discussing Brian Springer's experiment with satellite "downhaul" from the 1992 presidential campaign, *Spin* (1995), Zimmermann explains that because the ownership of material broadcast by satellite is ambiguous, the tape cannot circulate commercially; its "distribution and reception," she concludes, "are thrown into other in-between spaces outside traditional distribution channels" (175). What are these other spaces? Zimmermann says nothing about them, leaving the reader to guess at the potential of this fascinating tape to create alternative publics. Her discussion of pro-choice activist video in the previous chapter has similar limitations. Zimmermann provides a thoughtful description of a wide range of projects on the topic of reproductive politics, including the work of the Media Coalition for Reproductive Rights, whose tape *Spring of Lies* (1992) deals with the defense of Buffalo abortion clinics against Operation Rescue and the direct involvement of the videographers in these actions. Such semi-professional works circulate, she observes, "in a sphere that is different from that of more traditional oppositional films of the 1970s, exploiting the proliferation of VCRs to form underground feminist networks" (141). Zimmermann tells the reader nothing more, however, about the history of this tape's circulation. Nor does she draw out the

theoretical relation between the imperiled privacy of the reproductive body and the non-public public sphere of a network of VCRs.

These missed opportunities are disappointing partly because Zimmermann's previous book, *Reel Families: A Social History of Amateur Film* (1995), contains such detailed historical analyses of nonprofessional contexts of cinema. And her insistence in *States of Emergency* that the post- or transnational conditions of the society in which American documentary filmmakers currently operate require a method of reading oriented not only to the form and content of individual works, but more globally to economies of production and distribution, opens theoretical avenues for the criticism of nonfiction media that deserve to be elaborated more fully. This political-economic perspective has been available for some time to theorists of narrative cinema; the particular innovation of *States of Emergency* is to (re-)introduce it to documentary criticism. Beyond the enthusiastic introduction it provides to an authentically independent American cinema (hindered slightly by the lack of a filmography or list of distributors), the attempt to define the public sphere of documentary after the decline of cinematic-theatrical modes of spectation is the most significant contribution of *States of Emergency*, one that has the potential to open up new avenues for film and media research. One hopes that future writing in this field will draw out the implications of the important questions Zimmermann raises.

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BOOK NOTES

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Charles, John, ed. *Hong Kong Filmography, 1977-1997: A Complete Reference to 1,100 Films Produced by British Hong Kong Studios*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 2000. $75.00. This is an outstanding reference book written by one of the main contributors to *Video Watchdog,* a meticulous publication which always aims to get the facts right. The editor is familiar not only with Hong Kong but also with Cantonese and Mandarin cinema, making him sensitive to both contemporary cultural nuances as well as the literary context. Containing 1,102 reviews listing full credits, alternative titles, and the various differences between video, laserdisc, DVD, and VCD versions, this work fully justifies Tim Lucas's introduction of it as "the first serious, in-depth, critical guide to Hong Kong cinema in English" containing reviews written "with sensitivity, humor, and intelligence" (viii).

The reader will discover not only professional descriptions of this diverse cinema but also many insights (such as the recognition of Brigitte Lin Ching-hsia's contributions to the overwrought melodrama *Lady in Black* [1987]), deserved acclaim for underrated works (such as *Last Hurrah for Chivalry* [1978], *People's Hero* [1987], and *The Case of the Cold Fish* [1995]), little-known facts (such as the relationship of the female police movie *She Shoots Straight* [1990] to a Sung Dynasty story about family female soldiers), Wong Kar-wai's screenplay contributions to action movies, deserved acclaim for Roy Cheung's many Triad roles, as well as praise for Tommy Wong as "an underrated character actor" (259). Charles even provides important information concerning the dubbing of voices in Hong Kong films, including Maggie Cheung in *The Iceman Cometh* (1989) and Stephen Chiau in *Just Heroes* (1989). Additional material includes video resources, a glossary, and a meticulous index.

Within the period covered, the editor includes as much information possible. Those interested not only in high-profile names such as Evans Chan and John Woo but also in others such as Maria Cordero, Wu Ma, Chang Cheh, and Kara Hui Ying-hung will find their appetites fulfilled. However, although billed as a "complete reference," several titles are missing, and the editor is also far too harsh toward chosen *bêtes noirs* such as Danny Lee and Michael Wong in a manner very reminiscent of Pauline Kael. However, these criticisms are minor in relation to the achievement of a work which will surpass all other efforts and form an indispensable reference tool in future studies of Hong Kong cinema.

Tony Williams

Coombs, Felicity, and Suzanne Gemmel. *Piano Lessons: Approaches to* The Piano. Sydney: John Libbey & Co., 1999. Amongst the many challenging and fascinating interdisciplinary approaches covered in *Piano Lessons*—named after an earlier title for Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993)—are some which touch on ecology; but most essays deal with the topic of the oppressor and the oppressed in the film without making the connection between violence against women and violence against the land—and their associated "silencing." This is a theme that Campion herself strongly develops in *The Piano*. In these times of exceptional ecological destruction, Campion's overt criticism of historic violence and environmental practices that affect women and land is not to be ignored.

Sections called "Gender, Psychoanalysis, Melodrama," "Cultural Studies," and "Post Colonial Studies and Issues of Nation" provide useful and interesting material for university courses and for readers interested in feminist, racial, cultural, and social topics associated with film. The final section, "Diary: Cutting It Fine on the Editing Floor," is entertaining, amusing, and informative regarding film editing processes, giving insight not only into *The Piano* but also into Campion's latest release, *Holy Smoke*—Harvey Keitel in a dress and Jane Campion's ritualistic involvement of male crew members in crossdressing.

The contributors include Richard Allen, Madelaine Fogarty, Ruth Barcan, Laurence Simmons, Kirsten Moana

Thompson, Felicity Coombs, Neil Robinson, Stella Bruzzi, Lynda Dyson, Claire Corbett, Bridget Orr, and Anna Neill. They amply provide the anthology's multiple approaches, which deepen and widen understanding of a most controversial and successful antipodean film and the contribution of Jane Campion's work to the film industry as a whole.

Mary Jenkins & Jean Troy-Smith

Frayling, Christopher. *Sergio Leone: Something to Do with Death.* London: Faber and Faber, 2000. $20.00. According to the author, this work began as a critical study of Leone's films before changing into a biography. Despite furnishing some revealing material about the director, the entire work is little better than a scissors-and-paste production compiled from previously well-known books which the publishers should have considered translating into English in the first place. Judging by the extensive footnotes, much of the material reproduced in this book was already available in works on Leone by authors such as Noel Simsolo, Gilles Lambert, and Orneste de Fornari.

Frayling does provide some interesting perspectives on the director, seeing the influences of the commedia del'arte, the picaresque tradition, puppet theater, and European and Hollywood cinema on Leone's films. He has also interviewed many of Leone's family and collaborators. But the book is in dire need of a much better technical, visual, and sound analysis of the films themselves. Several questions emerge. Although Leone disparaged the operatic label applied to his work by Clint Eastwood and others, Frayling never examines how this motif can be usefully applied to his work, nor does he follow up Fulvio Morsella's comment concerning the medium's influence on the director (487). On many occasions, Frayling dutifully follows Leone's dismissal of other Italian Westerns (not all of them being as bad as he states). But he also paints a disturbing image of a director who was at times extremely callous (294) and refused credit to other contributors. Several errors mar the book, and the selective bibliography lacks any mention of previous critical work on the director. Frayling's book also raises many critical problems concerning methodology, problems which need further elucidation. It is, at best, valuable as a first step toward the appearance of more detailed and scholarly texts on the director.

Tony Williams

Goodwin, Cliff. *Evil Spirits: The Life of Oliver Reed.* London: Virgin, 2000. Oliver Reed was born into the profession of filmmaking (his uncle was the late director Sir Carol Reed), although his family connection did him little good. He clawed his way to stardom as a bit player until Hammer Films gave him his first big break: a starring role in *The Curse of the Werewolf* (1961). This led to more Hammer films, including a memorable turn as a violent Teddy Boy in Joseph Losey's *These Are the Damned* (1962) and as the drunken, psychotic Simon Ashby in Freddie Francis's *Paranoiac* (1963). Sensibly, Reed then abandoned Hammer's narrow genre confines for some small, memorable films, including *The Party's Over* (1963), *The System* (1964), and his breakthrough film, Michael Winner's *The Jokers* (1966). He further consolidated his reputation as a moody, mercurial leading man with his performance as Bill Sykes in Sir Carol Reed's film of *Oliver!* (1968). In all these films, the actor projected an assured screen presence, coupled with an air of sardonic insolence that recalls the noir leading men of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

But Reed's ego, and his fondness for alcohol, sabotaged what had been a promising start. And he soon disappeared into a series of undistinguished international co-productions and a long relationship with Ken Russell, for whom he made *Women in Love* (1969) and *The Devils* (1971). For the most part, however, Reed cultivated the public persona of a high-living hellraiser, and the London tabloids were more than happy to watch him fall apart in public. His final appearance, in Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (2000), was a major coup for the aging actor, but watching him is an agonizing experience: he seems tired and overweight; he died five days before the end of shooting.

Evil Spirits is a sad and often harrowing story, full of the promise of what might have been. Oliver Reed's life ultimately serves as a cautionary tale of how one can have everything and still lose it all. Cliff Goodwin's biography is workmanlike and incorporates an enormous amount of research, including interviews with co-workers, friends and even enemies, all of whom, it seems, tried to save Reed from his own excessive nature.

Wheeler Winston Dixon

Abstracts

Scott MacDonald, "Sacred Speed: An Interview with Nathaniel Dorsky"

Nathaniel Dorsky discusses the evolution of his filmmaking, from his early psychodramas and struggles to come to terms with gay desire, through his stunning paean to temperate-zone seasonality, *Hours for Jerome*, and his attempts to spiritually invigorate the "dust" of cinema in *Pneuma* and Alaya, to the recent trilogy—*Triste*, *Variations*, and *Arbor Vitae*—in which he provides meditative experiences that use what Dorsky calls "polyvalent" or "autogenous" editing, and silence, to train viewers to recognize the possibilities of the sacred in the everyday.

Darrell William Davis & Yeh Yueh-yu, "Warning! Category III: The Other Hong Kong Cinema"

This essay analyzes the workings of films classified as Category III in Hong Kong: pictures with explicit pornographic and "porno-violent" content that are restricted to adults only. We also consider Hong Kong's film ratings system in light of political censorship, artistic freedom, and the fortunes of the film industry in the post-1997 period. We note the preponderance of these films in Hong Kong, and see Category III as a microcosm of the industry rather than a reactionary exception. The rating functions as a marketing device to entice as well as warn, and more broadly to reassure the world of the continued existence of Hong Kong's freewheeling, permissive society. Category III films and their regulation reveal the tug-of-war between transgression and control throughout Hong Kong media.

Lynette Felber, "Capturing the Shadows of Ghosts: Mixed Media and the Female Gaze in *The Women on the Roof* and *The Governess*."

Two films set in the early days of photography, Carl-Gustav Nykvist's *The Women on the Roof* (1990) and Sandra Goldbacher's *The Governess* (1998), depict women who appropriate the new technology to establish themselves as professional photographers. Self-conscious meditations on gender and visual media, the films reverse the subject position, challenging the traditional male gendering of the voyeuristic gaze. Both films explore the implications of the female gaze through an innovative technique that embeds photographs within motion pictures, using the camera to emulate the gaze. The films contextualize the historical problem of women's acquisition of professional skills within theoretical problems posed by the gendered gaze.

Broderick Fox, "*Chill Out*"

Chill Out, the 1999 debut of young German filmmaker Andreas Struck, is a love-triangle story about the search for identity outside dominant cultural and sexual ideologies. Integral to the characters' search (and arguably becoming a fourth character) is contemporary Berlin, a city seeking its own distinct, post-reunification identity outside the powerful currents of global capitalism. Struck's film is globally accessible, yet also offers simultaneous allegorical readings specific to German reception and identification, concerning the struggle between national and transnational identification. *Chill Out* is perhaps most remarkable, however, for its destabilization of traditional links between sexual orientation, gender role, and gender identity, in the spirit of a new neosexual revolution.